

Classroom Learning: Spaces for Understanding, Practising and Making Selves.

A small-scale study of the learning experiences of five adults undertaking courses in two Scottish Further Education colleges.

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to explore the relationship between learning and identity in relation to five key participants in two specific learning settings. Holland et al.'s (1998) and Holland and Lave's (2001) work on identity as constructed and practised and Marková's (2003) work on the links between identity, dialogicality and dialogue informed my choice of research topic. I conducted my field work in two courses for adults learning in classrooms in Scottish further education (FE) colleges. Although I engaged with both student groups and their teachers I focused primarily on five learners. I used a biographical and interpretative approach to consider matters of identity with these five learners. I also used semi-structured interviews with them, the wider student groups and their teachers to explore perceptions and experiences of learning and whether learning had led to changes in them.

Although there was evidence of some permanence in the identities of the five learners I found that in the main their identities were situated, constructed and practised. I also found that learning processes and experiences in the classroom were as significant to them as other major self-making events in their lives. Their inherent dialogicality and its articulation through dialogical processes were evident in their accounts of the forging of their identities in their current learning settings and in their wider lives. It was clear that these specific learning settings, through the use of dialogue as the major learning tool and varied learner groupings, promoted these learners' dialogicality and offered opportunities for them to affirm selves and to construct and practise new selves. Their accounts also show that their views of their histories, their current situations and their futures were reframed as a result of changes to and enactment of selves in the learning context.

These five learners saw their learning processes and experiences as strongly interconnected with their wider social and personal environments and therefore aspects of the identities they forged in their learning contexts were also enacted in their wider lives and vice versa. I therefore concluded from my research that in relation to these five learners in these specific FE settings, there was a significant link between learning and identity.

This research has been carried out with the inspiration, support and endless generosity of colleagues in Cumbernauld College, Lauder College, Sabal Mòr Ostaig, Newbattle Abbey College, West Lothian College, and Adam Smith College (formerly Glenrothes College). I am also grateful to the Scottish Executive for part-funding the project. At a personal level my grateful thanks is due to Dr. Charles Anderson and to my family and close friends for their patience. I can never repay Geraldine, who walked every step of the way with me or Paul who stood solidly beside me.

I dedicate this work to my daughters, Camilla, Roberta and Sophie.

I declare that I have composed this thesis; that the work is entirely my own and that the work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signed:

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*così mi fece sbigottir lo mastro
quand'io li vidi sì turbar la fronte
e così tosto al mal giunse lo 'mpiastro*

(Dante; Canto XXIV; Inferno)

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEARNING AND IDENTITY

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Describing the relationship between Dante and his teacher, mentor and guide Virgil, Reynolds (2006) writes “canto XXIV of *Inferno* opens with one of the loveliest smiles of the work. The effect on Dante of the sudden clouding of Virgil’s face and his return to serenity is compared to the feelings of a shepherd who seeing the ground covered in hoarfrost goes back in despair into his house, believing it is snow. Going out again, he sees the world transformed” (2006, pp.183-4). Of the many possible interpretations of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, and the journey through *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, one could certainly be, a looking inwards at his own flawed humanity, culminating in a wondrous realisation of mystery and godliness within him through his contemplation of the divine. The moving warmth and tenderness shown by Virgil who lifts and carries Dante onwards, sensing when he is at his lowest ebb and entrusting his sometimes wayward charge to Beatrice for the final stage of his transformational journey, is the fundamental relationship within *Inferno*. This gentle but sure unfolding of a wondrous world where the master walks by his disciple’s side through a shared journey of renewal and change is a vision of teaching and learning which I have carried throughout my career and which has been a major impetus for this study.

I wanted to research the process of learning in order to understand more fully the human experience within it and how it can touch people and compel them so

profoundly that new lives and ways of being present themselves. My initial review of relevant literature reinforced my view of learning as transformational and of the importance of the teacher being part of that dynamic process. For example, Fullan (1993) writes that the key is for teachers to “see themselves and be seen as experts in the dynamics of change” and he indicates that the greatest need of people is to “find and give meaning to life”. Other writers such as Holland et al. (1998) and Wenger (1998) have suggested a connection between learning settings and identity construction. My recognition of the need to first understand identity in order to understand transformation through learning was very significant in shaping my approach to my research. From that recognition I decided to go further and to focus my research on an exploration of the relationship between learning and identity.

Erben (1998) writes that research should refer to lives “in such a way as to illuminate them in relation to a research objective”. I adopted this approach to my research. In order to understand identity and identities in learning, I used individual accounts of life histories and learning from a key participant group of individuals, whom I shall call Anthea, Bob, Evelyn, Catherine, Evelyn and Freda. I describe my first impressions of them in Appendix 6. The focus of my research was to what extent were their identities made or practised in the learning process; what was the role of the learning process and classroom environment in terms of their identity and self-making; to what extent did their learning in these specific learning contexts have an impact on their self-making; to what extent did these learners feel comfortable in their learning contexts; how much did they change through learning?

I decided to undertake my research in the Further Education (FE) sector in Scotland as it is a sector that I have experience in and am well informed about. As a Principal Teacher and Assistant Head Teacher in the schools sector I established links with local FE colleges and I then worked as a senior manager in an FE college for three years. For the last ten years, I have inspected the quality of FE provision and contributed to the development of national policy about it as a member of the FE team of her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE).

I also decided to focus specifically on part-time adult learners who in recent years have become the largest users of FE. The Scottish Executive review report on enrolments on college courses is almost five times as many as those in full-time provision (SE, 2004, Appendix 4). Although enrolments do not equate to student numbers, it is nonetheless clear that the proportion of part-time students is considerably higher than that of full-time students. We know from a recent report that the average age of these part-time students, attending college three or four days a week, is 30. We also know from this report and other recent key national policy documents such as: the *Focus on Learning* projects <http://www.sfeu.ac.uk/fol2>; and, *Student Learning in Scottish Further Education Colleges* (HMIE/SFEFC, 2004) of the social and cultural barriers that some learners, and in particular adults returning to education, have to overcome in order to engage again effectively in learning. Crossan et al.'s (2000) research into learning in Scottish FE, identifies a number of barriers preventing learners from participating in or sustaining their learning, including negative experiences of compulsory education, literacy and numeracy difficulties, lack of confidence and fear of failure and lack of family and community support for engagement in further education. HMIE reports also emphasise the

importance of colleges taking account of learners' histories and contexts (2006 and 2004) and developing supportive relationships with these learners to enable them to overcome such barriers to their learning.

Despite the fact that college publicity material and published HMIE inspection reports show that part-time learners, and in particular returning adults, are increasingly the majority users of FE provision in Scotland and are therefore arguably defining of the sector, research about them has until recently been sparse. However, Gallacher et al.'s most recent work (2006), part of a TLRP research project the aim of which was to facilitate transformations in the learning cultures within community based (FE) provision ... and through this to enhance engagement with learning in these settings" 2004, p.2) has been significant. The research, aimed at serving those "least inclined to learn" builds on his previous work on barriers to learning and the development of learning identities (2002) and, like my own research interests, addresses the issue of change in adult learners as a result of a particular learning process. Both sets of concerns, are I think, complementary; and my hope is that my findings can contribute as Gallacher's have, to a growing body of knowledge in the FE sector about the experiences and needs of adult returners and the potential for learning to be transformative for them.

What also emerges from HMIE reports, the *Focus on Learning* project and other wider national work is the transforming effect that learning can have on individuals and therefore its potential to change lives. My contact with adult learners as well as with their teachers as a contributor to the *Student Learning in Scottish Further Education* report (HMIE, 2004), as the co-author of the *Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland* report (SE, 2001), and as the author of *Changing Lives*

(HMIE, June, 2005) highlighted transformation and change as the one of the most significant outcomes of learning. I also found this emphasis on change and transformation in my exchanges with learners, managers and practitioners through my involvement in inspections of colleges in which I primarily focus on the quality of strategies and arrangements to widen participation in FE in Scotland. The potential of learning to change lives through personal transformation is also overtly acknowledged in FE college publicity and advertising material which talks of people returning to learning in order to seek change, improved circumstances and a different life.

My professional experience as a teacher of young people and as an inspector, observing learning and discussing the impact of learning, combined with my personal experience as learner, especially as a result of the Ed.D degree programme, had convinced me that learning could be transformational. Although I could have explored the potential for learning to be transformational in other learning settings such as community environments and workplaces, my knowledge of the Scottish FE sector led me to a decision to undertake my research in classrooms in the FE context. I was particularly interested to know whether specific classroom environments in that sector could enable transformative learning.

I commenced my research by meeting in large groups with adult returner learners attending courses in two FE colleges in the central belt of Scotland. College staff saw them as groups which would be of interest because they were from courses intended for adults returning to education, and looking for change in their lives. Through past experience and their knowledge of the courses, managers also saw these particular classroom environments, the teachers and their pedagogical practices as potentially

transformational and life-changing. The learners I met with were enrolled in an Access to Teaching programme, a course for which no qualifications are required and which moves learners in one year to sitting Highers examinations and then on to entrance to a university degree course; and an HNC in Social Care, a two-year part-time course leading to a professional qualification in the care sector.

I explained the nature of the research and the approach I wanted to take to it to these student groups and from those discussions, eighteen individuals from the Access to Teaching programme volunteered to take part and five volunteered from the HNC Social Care course. I considered it important to allow each college to decide how to manage their students' involvement in the research and for me to work within the parameters they set. As a result, in the college where I was permitted to make arrangements directly with participants, a core group of four learners, Anthea, Bob, Evelyn and Freda from the HNC Social Care course eventually emerged as being both willing and available to meet on two occasions. A fifth member of that group withdrew before the interviews started. In the other college, where all arrangements were managed by the class teacher, at the time of my research activity there were a number of sensitivities and disappointments around selection for entry to university, and practical obstacles which prevented pre-arranged meetings. As a result only one learner from the Access to Teaching programme, Catherine, was available to meet me twice. It was with these five individuals, whom I shall refer to throughout this thesis as key participants, that I was able to have in-depth explorations of the events in their lives which contributed to their identities and their understandings and experience of the learning process. In addition, from the large group with whom I discussed learning, I also interviewed Kathleen from the HNC Social Care class on

one occasion and conducted separate interviews with Claire, Kara and Elaine from the Access to Teaching course.

Although my core group of key participants was small, its size proved helpful as it allowed the time for the in-depth discussions I found were necessary to explore my refined research focus on the construction and practice of these participants' identities in their particular learning settings. I was able to explore very personal accounts of the lives of each individual and the life events that were significant to them. This allowed me to reach some common conclusions about the key participants in relation to the concept of identity; of its making and its practice. Secondly, through working from a common topic set, I could compare the accounts of learning, understandings and experiences of the learning process and context of the key participants with those of the other participants, both individually and as a group.

This short introduction explains the impetus and focus of my research and the relevance of my study to common, current concerns. In chapter two, I show how my research is located in my academic interests, and how what I read assisted me to decide on the topic of my research and informed the approach I took to it. Through my reading I found a definition of learning as a process of engagement which is profoundly transformative of self and therefore of the circumstances and lives of individuals. Holland et al. (1998), and Holland and Lave's (2001) constructivist view of identity which is that identity is continually constructed, responsive, volatile and situated and therefore improvised, rather than fixed, was a key concept in how I developed the framework I used to structure my research, how I conducted my fieldwork and how I analysed my data.

I also explain how Marková's (2003) assertion of the inherently dialogical relationship between the individual and the environment, of inner questioning, reflection and openness as part of an increasingly interdependent relationship between self and other leading to change or stability was central to the development of my thinking and the construction of my conceptual framework. On the basis of Marková, I then set out my understanding of dialogicality as an inherent human characteristic; an openness to and an engagement with the world. This openness to and engagement with the world has at its source a constant, dynamic and generative inner process of reflection and review of selves in relation to others.

In chapter three, I assert the importance of a collaborative non-hierarchical research approach, and describe my evolving project in terms of Burgess' (1984) notion of interactionism. I provide an account of sampling as a natural process of meeting and engagement within a particular context; and I explain in relation to validation how Mishler's (1990) definition of research as an ongoing activity of the social construction of knowledge through transparency of the methodology has been key to how I have sought to integrate my research within my wider professional life. I show how Erben's (1998) work on biography guided my semi-structured discussions with each of the five key research participants. I also show how Riessman's (1993) work on interpretative narrative analysis and Holland et al.'s (1998), Holland and Lave's work on identity construction and practice (2001), together with Dossena's (2005) work on the speech options available to the Scots, including the vernacular, informed my analysis of the accounts of the five key participants. In chapter three I also explain how I was able to relate the understandings, definitions and expectations of the five key participants to those of participants in the larger group and to reach a

view of their learning settings as a potential vehicle for constructing and practising identity for all the learners within them.

In chapter four, I provide an account of the identities of the five key participants and conclude that my analysis of them provides support for my constructivist view of identity while also pointing to the existence of some permanent features of their identities. My findings suggest that the key participants were the central protagonists in their self-making through their constant seeking out of new contexts as self-authoring sites in response to their dialogical relationship with the environment and their inherent dialogicality. Finally, I conclude that communication and dialogue are central to dialogical processes and were also key to both the practice and making of the identities of the research participants.

In chapter five, I locate each of the five key participants within their learning settings of an HNC in Social Care and an Access to Teaching course leading to university entrance. I describe the culture of these classrooms in terms of course objectives and teachers' and learners' aims. I also set out how the key participants describe learning and its purpose. I provide an account of each participant in their learning context and show how these learning contexts provide them with opportunities for self-making and the practice of selfdom.

In chapter six, I describe how the five key participants and the wider group defined learning, viewing it as a combination of a learning process, of life and personal experiences, feelings and expressions of themselves; which helped them to make sense of both their past and their present lives. I explain how the key participants were increasingly able to practise their individual identities within their learning settings, using the learning context as a means of self-making. I argue that

dialogicality was a major factor in their self-making and practice of identity throughout their lives and was equally active within these learning settings. I also indicate that through these learning environments which valued and promoted dialogicality and dialogical processes the participants' identities and consequently their wider lives were altered. I then focus on the role of dialogical processes, dialogue and language, non-verbal communication and emotion as articulations of this dialogicality. I conclude that dialogue was central to key participants' dialogical processes and a main means whereby they re-integrated their altered and transformed identities within their bonding relationships with other learners.

Finally in chapter seven I locate my conclusions within a broader social and political context and put forward some possible considerations for policy makers and teachers.

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEARNING AND IDENTITY

CHAPTER 2 A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

My introduction to this thesis located my research within both the context of my professional concerns and current trends within further education in Scotland. In this chapter, I will outline the theories which led me to a definition of learning and to identifying the purpose and focus of this study; which is to explore the links between learning and identity in relation to five adults undertaking courses in two FE colleges in Scotland. I will also set out the key ideas of my conceptual framework which guided the structuring of my research and my analysis of the findings. Finally, I will briefly review current research projects which have been most significant for my own research and show how my study might add to current thinking about learning.

I will approach my review of the literature in a thematic way, linking ideas from different discourses and disciplines which have been significant for my research, and bringing into play authors and theories as appropriate, in order to reveal my developing thinking. My particular focus is to identify how transformation in classroom learning can be achieved and therefore to look at spaces within a system which is fundamentally concerned with reproduction, where individuals can be transformed.

Wertsch (1991, pp. 4-5) suggests the need to “reformulate the questions we ask so that disciplinary and sub disciplinary integration will be a natural or even necessary

outcome". My inter-disciplinary orientation (Wertsch; 1991; p.145) towards the issue of learning may lead I hope to a more complete understanding of both the process of learning and its purpose.

No space for identity

"There is no space for identity in classrooms; it would get in the way" (5th year school pupil).

Before I review some of the literature on the potential of learning to transform, which is the focus of this thesis, I will give a brief account of some of the theories that understand schooling as the reproduction of inequalities. I consider these theories provide an important and valid alternative to the view of education as a positive transformative force. They argue that education is a means of reinforcing societal norms and rules and of perpetuating social and economic inequalities. I will also consider some of the related literature about disaffection and marginalisation.

Theorists which define schooling as reproducing inequalities, set aside any idealistic views of education as a means of addressing the problems of society and providing opportunities for every individual to share. They argue that education policy is strongly implicated in an economic and social process of hierarchy and marginalisation. They also argue that education processes are themselves strongly divisive.

Young and Whitby (1977) in making comparisons between what they call Marxist structuralist views on education and structural-functionalist definitions (p.73) refer

to a relationship between education, economy and society which functions “to maintain the necessary conditions for technological survival” (p.73). Furthermore, in their view, policy makers dispose of and design education as a “quantifiable resource”, unequally distributed, and in itself involved in perpetuating the inequalities which through policies to widen access, policy makers were concerned to overcome” (p.16). Apple (1987) supports this view but goes further, viewing education as a powerful tool which represents and acts on behalf of a dominant group within society, their values and beliefs. He writes “education is caught up in the real world of shifting and unequal power relations” (p.viii). “School” he writes (1987, p. 42) “is not a passive mirror, but an active force, one that also serves to give legitimacy to economic and social forms and ideologies so intimately connected with it”. The societal rules which govern behaviour, social attitudes, morals and beliefs are filtered down from the macro level of economic and political structures to the individual via work experience, educational processes and family socialisation (Apple, 1976, p.33).

Apple further asserts that it is in the interplay between what we teach, the “legitimate culture” and the social relations of classroom life (Apple, 1987, p.40) that we see the real relations schools have to an unequal economic structure” (p.40).

Sarup (1982) writes about the politicisation of the education system since 1976, through direct state intervention and control of teacher training, the curriculum and assessment in order that education can be used to support the economy and in particular provide the required labour market. He argues that education acts as a filter creating different hierarchies of skills including an unskilled workforce in order to meet market needs. He refers specifically (1982, p.4) to educational institutions

which play a crucial role in reproducing socio-economic systems and in the production of human capital through the inculcation of skills and knowledge on the one hand and on the social transmission of varying levels of ignorance on the other. It could be argued that these theories are supported by the high level of literacies needs in Scotland as reported in ALNIS (SE, 2001). This report defines literacy as an ability to function or participate in community and working life and states that the number of adults whose levels of literacy and numeracy prevent them from leading full lives and whose literacies levels affect their health, housing and personal and social relationships, was in excess of 800,000.

Apple (1982, p.336) refers to ideology within education which “inheres in and regulates modes of relation” reflects society and acts to sustain a dominant value system of inequality within the macro structure and its economic needs. I think this notion of transmission and reproduction is best explained by Bourdieu’s concept of “habitus” (1990, p. 53) and Bourdieu and Passeron’s definition of “pedagogic action” (1977, p.5) as “the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power”. Bourdieu describes classrooms as contexts of teachers and peer-group pressures (1984, pp. 169-170). They uphold an ideology and lifestyle which are imposed through an inherent *habitus* of cultural practices and structures “adjusted to the particular conditions” in which they are constituted (Bourdieu, 1977, p.95) and which are “incorporated” (Bourdieu, 1977, p.90) rather than explicitly taught or demanded of recipients (1984, p.26).

Bourdieu’s concept of “habitus” as systems and structures inherent within social groupings or organisations and formed by a predominant set of beliefs is highly relevant when considering the classroom environment within the wider economic

and policy context. He describes (1984) a system of classification which he suggests exists in the classroom, and which consists of bourgeois-led legitimised and non-legitimised taste, values and norms of behaviour (pp.169-170). These norms he argues carry status and result in a covert ethos of favour and disfavour. The classroom as representative of institutional and social acceptability or non-acceptability is therefore a powerful controlling tool which, by definition, marginalises certain individuals and ensures enduring and un-challenged educational and social élitism. Through “structuring” and organising, (1990, p.53) the *habitus* of the classroom makes the learning context a mechanism for maintaining the status quo and a certain vision of society.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977, p.5) go further and describe pedagogic action, which they define as a combination of factors, habitus, structures and practice, which go beyond the process of formal education, as an endemic and sustained act of “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p.viii). It is interesting to consider these theories against recent statistics about the number of young people in Scotland who appear to be disaffected by education. The Scottish Executive publication *More Choices: More Chances: A Strategy to Reduce the Proportion of Young People not in Education, Employment or Training in Scotland* (2006) reports that “the proportion of 15-19 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Scotland is high on an international comparison”. The estimated number of such young people in Scotland is 35,000. It goes on to say that compared with other OECD countries, Scotland has a high proportion NEET and a lower rate of education participation. Crossan et al.’s work (2004) which identifies negative

experiences of compulsory schooling as a barrier to participation in learning is also interesting in this regard.

Foucauldian theory on discipline when applied to classrooms, in my view, strengthens a view of education as reproduction and the effect of pedagogic action as a social tool in relation to individual learners. Referring to Foucault's views on discipline, and systems of hierarchy, supervision and reward, Sarup(1982, p.15) shows how the organisation of space, time and assigning of individual spaces in schools provides an effective means of social control as well as a means of intensifying the effect of a particular cultural environment and the pedagogic action within it. The organisation of schools and classrooms enforce stricter discipline, emphasise work socialisation and increase ideological pressure (p.109).

Having considered some of the literature on education as reproduction of inequalities, I want now to consider the literature on disaffection as a means of response; by individuals, learners and teacher to a predominant set of values and norms within classrooms and institutions. Rudduck (2004) writes "some pupils disengage because the conditions of learning in school today do not always support the development of all young people as learners" and she goes on to comment that some schools have changed less in their deep structures in the last twenty or thirty years than young people have changed (p.1).

The individual as a lone voice within a system of education over which s/he has little control, and where identity is often ignored, is captured in Merton's strain theory and account of "anomie" (Merton, 1968, pp. 211-212). He describes the clash between ideologies and goals of the learning institution, expressed in norms and expectations of behaviour, and the goals of individual learners which are often hidden and which

are culturally and ideologically different. The result he suggests is disempowerment, deteriorated social relationships and ultimately a new assertion of self and culture through rebellious and deviant behaviour. He writes “when the institutional system is regarded as the barrier to the satisfaction of legitimised goals, the stage is set for rebellion” (Merton, 1968, pp.210-211). He goes on “the social structure we have examined produces a strain toward anomie and deviant behaviour” (1968, pp. 210-211). Instead of deviance and non-conformism being seen then as a psychological problem particular to certain individuals, Merton (1968) suggests that the problem to be addressed lies rather within institutions or the environment. This suggests that it may be the inability of schools to accommodate and validate individual cultures, aspirations and goals which must be tackled if all young people are going to engage with learning. A school pupil, whom I met a few years ago, expressed this in his own way: “Yes.. I am angry! At school the teachers pick on me. They dinnae listen and the work’s crap” (*a school pupil on day release at college*).

Sennett & Cobb (1977) support this view, describing deviance as an expression of suppressed emotion, and school as often the arena where “injured” (pp 79-90) learners give vent to “an emotionality that has quite different roots” but is strongly associated with “social legitimacy” and “social value” (pp.265-266). What is being highlighted by these writers is the pivotal role of the school or learning institution in providing or failing to give social recognition; and validating or downgrading individuals’ cultures and histories. These theories suggest furthermore, the powerful part that learning settings and the value-systems within them play in shaping learners’ self-perceptions; and their responsibility for learners’ subsequent actions in response.

This set of concepts which provides an explanation for the early alienation of learners from both education, and as a consequence arguably from society itself, suggests the potentially unique role of learning as a means of social acceptability and participation; of providing a space where individual history, context and society have their legitimate place. These theories also emphasise the importance of a learning environment which recognises and acknowledges every individual.

A strong commitment to the inherent value of each individual, and a belief in, and focus on, the spiritual dimension of learning have been important issues for my own research. These values which uphold the integrity and virtue of every learner have been best articulated by writers such as Freire and hooks. Freire (2004) writes about the ability of each person to transform their learning contexts, to enrich their learning communities and ultimately to create more equal and democratised societies through the empowerment brought about by a political awakening and “conscientização” (pp.17-18) which is nurtured in the classroom. His is a view of education in which individuals can create radical societal change by their unique contributions within ideologically charged, culturally rich and dialectic classrooms in which everyone is visible and active. He writes:

Banking education inhibits creativity and domesticates the intentionality of consciousness by isolating consciousness from the world, thereby denying people their ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human ... problem-posing education bases itself on creativity and stimulates true action upon reality.

A learning context where learners are encouraged to be more “fully human” is a response to the authenticity of human beings engaged in inquiry and creative transformation (Freire, 2003, p.84). For hooks, the achievement of true equality for

socially oppressed individuals and groups is also cultivated in classrooms through direct communication at a deeply personal and spiritual level:

to educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin. (hooks, 1994, p.13)

This theme of a wider social and political role for learning and classrooms has been a continual concern of mine. The potential of the learning context as either a liberating force or a tool which socially and politically shapes and controls, as a means of validating some learners and negating other learners and what they bring, has preoccupied me for most of my career in education.

While reproductive theory defines classrooms as promoting and preserving the values of a dominant society or political ideology, resistance theory offers an alternative view of learning as a means of confronting existing practices and beliefs. Aronowitz & Giroux (1986) see learning settings as potentially “democratic public spheres” (p.19), where learning is a democratic process and where an emancipatory pedagogy develops the ability of each individual to critique, challenge and to bring about social change through their own agency. Resistance theory raises questions about what education is for, the value of knowledge as an end in itself; and by implication it challenges both policy makers and practitioners. In contrast to reproductive theory, resistance theory focuses on learning contexts which are constantly constructed through a universally enacted process of negotiated knowledge. Changing knowledge as an outcome of exchange in these settings is

founded on individual diversity, participation and an evolving ability to conceptualise, to evaluate and to articulate. In defining learning settings in this way, these theorists both ascribe a unique societal role to the classroom and regard it as offering a future for society which is truly democratic and culturally rich.

Aronowitz & Giroux (1986) view classrooms as politically and socially contested spaces in which there is a need for a radical pedagogy (p.131) which brings into focus the reality of individuals and their social practices. What is required is learning settings which are configured so as to: deconstruct relations of dominance; not value one ideology over another; take seriously the “counter-logic” (p.105) of learners; and eliminate class, racial and gender oppression (p.132).

The theme of freedoms, rights and, by implication, social participation through learning is also explored by Tomlinson (1994). She argues that education is not a commodity to be bought, sold or rationed, but a “right and a pre-condition of freedom for all citizens” (p.7). She rejects formulaic and generalist policies which provide for a generation and which obscure the individual and their rights as a human being. She writes that education offers the promise of: “freedom from ignorance, economic want and political, social and economic manipulation ... freedom to develop intellectual and practical capacities; to out talents and capacities at the service of society; to exercise critical and informed judgements; to develop understanding and personal integrity; to respect fellow humans and associates in a community of equals” (p. 7).

While there is an unmistakeable political overtone combined with a radical change agenda in the theories of the writers I have cited so far, such as Aronowitz & Giroux, hooks and Freire, Tomlinson’s writing is based on a humane (1994, p.9) vision for

education. Her view is that proper respect being paid to individuals will lead to societal well-being. She regards education as accommodating and developing the individual, as recognising their contexts, histories and inner worlds, as upholding the innate value of every individual to society. In Tomlinson's (1994) view, classrooms and institutions can play a crucial role in bringing together the integrated wholeness of every person, within a learning and wider human community, for a universal purpose. Goodlad (1997) also writes about issues of individuality in learning. He asserts: "education is an adventure of the self. It is natural, then, to think of education as a matter of private purpose and experience" (p.155).

Common to these theorists, is a hope for, and expectation of, a more equal and just society. Furthermore, theirs is a evolving and non-hierarchical vision of learning settings where no one set of values and norms prevails and where ethos is created through the individuality of all participants. In cherishing all learners, I believe, fundamental to these theories is a doctrine of faith in the socially transformative capability of all learners; in their potential for individual change and their capacity for changing others.

Since I was interested in learning as a catalyst for change I turned to feminist research literature which I think best expresses the importance of feelings and person-to-person contact as a change mechanism. Oakley (cited in Lather, 1991, p.60) writing about research conducted with women and their experience of motherhood emphasises a collaborative, dialogic seeking for "greater understanding". For her, what is fundamental to research is getting involved with people and the value of their emotional responses. Lather (1991) writing from a postmodern and feminist standpoint brings both pedagogy and research paradigms

together and provides a view of pedagogy which is inspired by principles of research design:

the potential for creating reciprocal, dialogic research designs is rooted in the intersection between people's self-understandings and the researcher's efforts to provide a change-enhancing context. (p.65).

This view has been significant in my understanding of learning. Like research, the learning process becomes an interplay of self-understandings between self and other. Seen through the lens of this model of research design, learning contexts, like research contexts, are characterised by reciprocity within person-to-person environments which have at their centre the impetus to create new ontologies and means of generating knowledge. A research paradigm which focuses on persons, relationships and emotions can be equally applied to education, suggesting a learning environment which is enabling through person-to-person interaction and through responses to different knowledge brought by others.

Self and other

Both the individual and the concept of the individual in social and community settings have been an important concern for all the authors I have referred to. While I have some difficulty with impositional models of learning, with value-ridden learning contexts which uphold particular social structures and espouse traditional values (Tam, 1998 and Arthur, 2000) I can appreciate the communitarian movement which focuses on individual identity but links it to social responsibility and a duty to make a difference. Etzioni's view of communitarianism is that it can be both particularistic and universal (2004, p.11). The relationship between the two resides in

duty to the community of the individual: "Identity is profoundly tied to communities, and thus to particularistic obligations" (2004, p.21). This set of ideas may be regarded as somewhat idealistic; nonetheless the emphasis which it places on the strong association of individual with society, and society with learning has been convincing for me.

In this section I have set out some general philosophical considerations about education, knowledge and learning which I have found significant in reaching an understanding of learning and formulating my research topic. What connects all of these theories is firstly an assertion of the unique role of education and learning as a means of creating a democratic society of equals. The view of all of these writers is that learning has the potential to act as the powerhouse for radical societal change and further that society can only be transformed through empowered, free-thinking individuals. It follows that for them, learning is therefore a social phenomenon with social application and a means of understanding the world. Secondly, these theories are rooted in a conviction of both the transformative power of all learners and their universal capacity to be transformed through social connection and exchange. Thirdly, within these theoretical perspectives is a deep faith in teachers' agency within a context of dominant institutional or political ideologies. Coburn (2004) for example, argues that while the external environment to some extent influences classroom practice, teachers' pre-existing beliefs may mediate these influences. She suggests that practitioners' reflexive action in response to external influences should be extended to embrace a wider epistemology that would help ensure that through their professional practice they recognise the value of every individual, their contexts and aspirations. Pollard and Triggs (1997) make a similar point in writing about the

social contexts of learning where they state that: “reflective teachers should be open-minded enough to constructively critique their own beliefs, as well as those of others” (p.27).

It may be argued then that as far as these writers are concerned, they perceive their role as setting in motion what is already beneath the surface within teachers’ dispositions. In writing one assumes mainly for teachers, they recognise that a pedagogical approach which validates and empowers individuals, gives space to emotion and human interaction and which speaks to the spiritual within the self, stirring learners into action for themselves, may well be a suggestion which is welcomed by practitioners.

In coming to the end of this section of my review, I want to draw attention to two main themes within this literature. The first is the issue of the individual and her role in society. For these writers, society can only be transformed through empowered, free-thinking individuals. The second issue relates to the relationship between education and learning. In this first part of the chapter, I have identified certain ideological stances on which I believe a system of education might be based. These beliefs enshrine particular sets of values which might shape the learning process, leading to learners’ active engagement with knowledge. These theories about learning and education are also however founded on more fundamental notions of personal transformation and change, on learners’ individual identities within learning contexts. These theories have informed my choice of research topic, that of exploring the links between learning and identity; they have also influenced the design and conduct of the research and my analysis of the data.

Key concepts in a framework for research

Transforming self

The relationship between person and community and the transforming effect of learning as a social activity between interacting individuals became increasingly central to my thinking. The idea of personal transformation, rather than social or political transformation, through an inspirational exchange is made explicit in hooks' (1994) writing about the transformative effect of a "transgressive" school experience as a black female in an all-black environment. She writes about the irresistible quality of that education contrasting it with the more mainstream and pedestrian experience of mixed-race schooling which was later imposed on her:

School changed utterly with racial integration. Gone was the messianic zeal to transform our minds and beings that had characterised teachers and their pedagogic practices in our all-black schools. Knowledge was suddenly about information only. It had no relation to how one lived, behaved (hooks, 1994, p. 3).

Some of the issues about learning which hooks has identified and which are fundamental to theories I mentioned earlier are articulated in Heron's (1996) work on co-operative enquiry. I found Heron's writing on research very influential in developing my thinking about learning. He writes of research "it is a vision of persons in reciprocal relation using the full range of their sensibilities to inquire together into any aspect of the human condition with which the transparent body-mind can engage" (1996, p.1). The transactions between learners and their teachers which can so move and inspire are captured well in what Heron (p.21) refers to when talking about collaborative research as empathetic resonance, tacit knowing through participation leading to "human flourishing" (p.11).

His is a paradigm of research where “worlds and people are what we meet”, where research participants by virtue of being in communion with holistic others and with what is universal are able to transcend both knowers and what is known. This personal transformation arrived at through being “with you, alongside you, empathising with you; and yet not losing myself in confluence with you because the dialogue between us both bridges and preserves our differences” (Reason, 1988, cited by Heron, 1996, p.21) in the act of researching is also fundamental to learning.

Wenger (1998) has defined learning as a social activity. But equally important in his world-view is a concept of learning as an “an experience of identity” (p.215) because learning forms who we are, and learning is personally and socially transformative. Lave & Wenger (1991) adopt a similar position to Wenger (1998) on learning as a social event but they also located it within the expansive and ever-changing mould of the life-cycle. In offering this “longer and broader concept of what it means to learn” (p.121) and in regarding learning as continual and pervasive, their view provides an alternative to more reductionist, narrow definitions of internalised cognitive processes which have no direct bearing on the external and lived world of the learner. Rather than defining learning in terms of a skill set and a purely cognitive activity which is segregated, located within the learner and has no social currency (p.122), Lave and Wenger (1991) have defined learning more broadly as practice and the learner as practitioner (p. 49). Furthermore, in claiming that “knowing is inherent in the growth and transformation of identities”, learning, transformation and identity are conceptually linked. It therefore follows that learning as a process is integrated within the self and the agency of self in social settings. Learning therefore has a social outcome; and is a mix of inner and external activity. It is a force for change

and transformation and is the dynamic through which individual and group identity evolves.

Learning and self

Of all the learning literature I reviewed I found constructivist educational theory as articulated by Bruner (1996) particularly relevant to my research. Bruner writes “education is not simply a technical business of well-managed information processing ... it is a complex pursuit of fitting a culture to the needs of its members and of fitting its members and their ways of knowing to the needs of the culture” (1996, p.43). The important principle to be grasped is that of negotiation and responsiveness, in a two-way and highly individualised exchange. To be precise, education in Brunerian terms is a continual process of meaning-making, a “spiral curriculum” (p.39) within an established and evolving framework of “individual histories” and understandings conducted within an inter-subjective “interpretative community” (p.59). Through dialogue with other active minds, “we learn an enormous amount not only about the world but about ourselves by discourse with others” (p.93). Indeed Bruner’s view is that education is crucial to the formation of the self (p.35).

Otherness in Bruner’s (1996) view is central to constructing knowledge and consequently dialogue and the dialogic process are also key factors in learning. Language as an aspect of dialogue is a system of symbols he argues through which we categorise and label and through which we externalise or record inner activity. According to Bruner (1996) language can also represent transcendence of our

linguistic limits, an acquired “metalinguistic gift” (p.19). Language and dialogue are aspects of what he refers to as an inner dialogical process, of openness and reflection.

I consider that these features of the learning process, are both consistent with and complimentary to the social constructivist view of learning where “peripheral legitimate participation”, the gradual assimilation of individuals within a community, and as a result within a society, its norms and discourses, can lead to individual and group transformation.

A constructivist model of learning is also offered by writers such as Coutts, Drinkwater and Simpson (2001) in reviewing the pedagogical impact of ICT. They write (p.231) “ICT enables new forms of interaction: between learners and materials, learners and tutors and between groups of learners” generating new knowledge.

Scardamalia and Bereiter (1999) take the view that learning can take place in knowledge-building communities developed within classrooms (p. 288) and have defined knowledge as collaboratively constructed by productive (p. 288) groups of learners. These theorists have defined learning as collective action, and the process of jointly creating knowledge is seen by them as transformative both individually and universally. While there may be differences in these different theorists’ intended meanings of transformation, the principle of change at least, personal or behavioural, applies to all. What was particularly interesting to me was the assertion that learning/research activity itself becomes not only a condition for membership but an evolving “form of membership” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53) based on changing individual selves and changing group identity.

The issue of feeling and emotion cannot be ignored when reflecting on personal and collective change. Merton (1968) to whom I referred earlier, has built an entire theory around it. Bourdieu (1984) has alluded to it in his theory of legitimisation in terms of culture and values. Bruner (1996) writes: “a system of education must help those growing up in a culture find an identity within that culture. Without it they stumble in their effort after meaning. It is only in the narrative mode that one can construct an identity and find a place in one’s culture. Schools must cultivate it, nurture it, cease taking it for granted” (p.42). Bruner links the narrative mode to “meaning-making” (p.41), and defines as a mode of thinking and feeling that helps children create a version of the world in which psychologically they can envisage a place for themselves. Feeling and “narrative sensibilities” (p.42) are therefore a key aspect of the construction of knowledge.

From the literature on the prime role of affect and emotion in learning, the work of Collins, Harkin and Nind (2002) has been the most influential for me. Like other theorists they define learning as transformative, active and interactive (pp. 164-174) but central to transformation is an environment of nurturing relationships and rich communication: “thinking cannot be separated from feeling, and the emotional climate of the classroom is vital to good learning”. Applying Rogers’ (1983) theories on “person centred counselling” they suggest that “unconditional positive regard” (p.20) is not only a worthy principle for an ethos within learning settings but that learners require it as a support and teachers possess a tacit desire to “connect” (p.18) with learners. Love and warmth are very important in teaching people of all ages (p.34).

To summarise, my reading of the literature and the theories of among others, Bourdieu (1984 and 1990), Tomlinson (1994), Aronowitz and Giroux (1985), hooks (1994), Freire (2004) and Coburn (2004) have led me to a definition of learning as an activity or process which takes place within a context, or organised system, shaped by national, local and institutional policy and driven by certain ideologies. Bruner (1996), Heron (1996, 1997 and 2000), Wenger (1998) and Lave and Wenger (1991) have led me to understand learning as an activity of the mind and inner self which is externalised through actions practised within the classroom and through which we are able to mediate our local and wider environments. I am convinced by their arguments that learning represents a way of describing a dialectic which takes place between individuals within their learning and broader social environments. I also agree with Collins et al. (2002) and Wenger (1998) that the dialectic which leads to change and transformation is conducted in the inner as well as the social worlds of learners. These theorists reinforced my view that formal curricula focused on the attainment of knowledge and skills provide agendas for learning and a focus for learning interactions. However, I believe that the contexts that curricula provide also offer opportunities for deeper transactions leading to personal transformation which are, at least, as important as the attainment of knowledge and skill.

In order to complete my conceptual framework for my research into what connects learning and identity, I will now turn to the literature concerning the inner life of individuals, to identity theory and to matters of dialogue, language and the dialogical process as both inner and external activities within learning.

Self and identity

What characterises constructivist literature on learning it seems, is growth, renewal and response. Constructivist views of identity as expressed by Holland et al. (1998) and Holland & Lave (2001) are consistent with constructivist learning theory in that both learning and identity are seen as practised, and knowledge like identity is constructed both as an inner activity and an activity undertaken jointly with others.

Holland et al. (1998) write: "social constructivism conceives discourses and practices to be the tools that build the self in contexts of power, rather than as expressions of stable interpretations of world and values that have been imparted to a person through enculturation" (p.27). Theirs is a version of identity which is then volatile and built, rather than a "culturalist" standpoint (1998, p.13; p.27) which defines identity as stable, consistent and fixed and therefore expressed rather than practised. I found Holland et al.'s (1998) view of identity as complex, contradictory, and variable depending on context, more persuasive than the culturalist view of identity as generally unchanging.

Holland et al. (1998) argue that identity is constructed through an improvised response "in the flow of activity within specific social situations ... from the cultural resources at hand" (p.4), within a social and historical context of relationships and events. Identity carries the imprints of a life-history as well as representing a generative base "from which people create new activities, new worlds, and new ways of being" (p.5). They reject notions of identity as "selves" which "persist through time, regardless of change in social or material conditions" (p.27). However, they do recognise that there can be some durability within a concept of impermanence, since people bring a history to the present and therefore some aspects of identity are

lasting. But since individuals come to each new context as “an untidy compilation of perspectives, some developed into symbolized identities”, and since identity is responsive, a consequence of the interaction between self and environment, it follows that what is durable is also fragile and susceptible. Holland et al. (1998) write, we are a “composite” of “many often contradictory, self-understandings and identities, whose loci are often not confined to the body but spread over the material and social environment and a few of which are completely durable”.

The productive exchange between self or selves and context leading to self-making is referred to in Holland and Lave (2001) as “the working creativity of historically produced agents and the interconnected differences among their differences, points of view and ways of participating in the production of ongoing struggles” (Holland & Lave, 2001, p.3). Through this “contentious local practice” (pp.6-7), as dialogic beings we mediate the historic and local events of our lives. As constructed selves, we are then in a continuing dialogical relationship combining “the intimate or personal world with the collective space of cultural forms and social relations” (1998, p.5) around us, both with our history and with our local circumstances. It is this process of dialogism as reactivity to otherness, in which our cultural systems, inner speech and “inner activity” (1998, p.8) are all in play which leads to self-making and a practice of self.

Holland and Lave suggest that we either incorporate events and others or we take up a position of “not-in-me” (Holland & Lave, 2001, pp.14-15). These cultural exchanges between self and other take place within contexts where gesture, expression, discourses and norms carry certain significances. Within these contexts, the decision to identify with certain others, or contexts or norms of behaviour,

“suturing” (1998, p.270), depends on social positioning and legitimacy or “positionality” (p.271). Self-making is both how the individual responds in the “space for authoring” (p.272) which the contexts afford, and the opportunities for “new figured worlds” to come about as an outcome of that response.

Volatility and unpredictability are in Holland et al. (1998)’s terms a strong feature of practised and constructed identity. However, the constant flow of energy which moves people into different contexts of self-making (1998, p.7), an internalised “cultural logic”, is presented by them as an enduring feature of identity, which suggests that culturalist perspectives cannot be totally dismissed. They acknowledge “cultural logic” (p.15) as an inherent dialogical aspect of human nature thereby recognising an element of permanence in identity. The use of the word “logic” also suggests some form of rationale in the self-making activities of individuals. This acknowledgement of “cultural logic” contrasts with their view of self-making activity as “led by hope, desperation, or even playfulness, but certainly by no rational plan – from one socially and culturally formed subjectivities to another” (Holland et al., 1998, p.6-7).

My interpretation of these disjunctions is that both the inherent dialogical aspect of human nature and the tendencies towards incoherence in identity, cause individuals to make choices; to act either impulsively or with forethought and care. This lack of theoretical consistency is in my view welcome, and all the more convincing, since it represents the dialogical nature of both the theory and the theorists.

So far I have developed a concept of learning as a process which is both constructed and practised through the agency of the individual and which impacts on the immediate and wider environment of that individual. It is a process or an experience

which through the building of knowledge (both an individual and a social undertaking) leads to change and transformation. My reading of Holland et al. and Holland and Lave in relation to identity has also led me to notions of change; to self-making, to internally generated actions or thoughts; to reformed subjectivities (1998, p.18) in response to changing contexts. Context, response, discourses and practices are then important both to self-making and to transformations or change within learning.

Strikingly common to both the learning literature and the literature on identity is the importance of an inner process: Bruner (1996) refers to it as do Lave and Wenger (1991). Holland et al. (1998) also state “we build on internal processes and inner life” (p.8). Also important to both self-making and identity and to learning is the connection of the individual to a society, group or individual, within a dialectical context of dialogue (Holland et al.1998, p. 270-2). There is a connection here to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory of situated peripheral learning and the gradual assimilation of individuals into a group leading to changed individual and group identities. At the heart of the relationship of the “I” to others is reflection, self-questioning and dialogism. Holland et al. write: “in the figured world of dialogism, the vantage point rests within the “I” and authoring comes from the “I” but the words come from collective experience”. They go on to argue that it is “the mixture of perspectives” of the “I” and the words of others which creates our ideas of ourselves and identities (pp.171-2).

I agree with Holland et al (1998) that identity “as the expressible relationship to others” is dialogical (p.172), therefore I will now consider the construction and

practice of self through dialogicality and the expression of dialogicality through dialogue.

Defining and practising self

A strong feature of the educational, learning and research literature I have reviewed so far has been the relationship between the individual and community or society. Earlier in this chapter I concluded from my reading that learning was a social phenomenon with a social application, and that learners possessed a universal capacity to be transformed through their social connections and exchanges. Lather (1991), Heron (1996), hooks (1994) and Freire (2004) have emphasised reciprocity and dialogicality and a shared understanding which is both voiced and tacit.

Bruner (1996) identified the importance of dialogue and discourse in the construction of knowledge. Holland et al. (1998) focus on the dialogical relationship between self and other. The dynamic between inner processes and their externalisation through activity or voicing, and the role of this dynamic in change or transformation, are therefore crucial issues within this research on learning and identity.

Vygotsky (1962) has defined the relationship between thought and speech as: “thought and language, which reflect reality in a way different from that of perception, are the key to the nature of human consciousness. Words play a central part not only in the development of thought but in the historical growth of consciousness as a whole” (p.153). In his view there is a continual dynamic between thought and speech; because words change their “inner nature” (p. 124), the relationship of thought to word changes, and therefore thought is not merely

expressed through words but comes into existence through them. What is important for a theory of learning is the central concept of inner speech, the “to and fro” (p.152) relationship between thought, inner speech and words and the totality of this continuous process in developing knowledge.

Having located the construction of both learning and identity in social and dialogical settings, I found Marková’s (2003) theory of social knowledge highly relevant. She has a broad view of knowledge based on concepts of “social representations” (p.xiii), and dialogicality as an inherent human characteristic which contrasts with the more scientific view of knowledge as being arrived at through the power of “individual rationality”. Social knowledge is then based on representations of the social realities in which people live rather than an individual journey of the mind. She sees knowledge as “rooted in the past, culture, traditions and language” (p.xii), highly relevant to particular contexts and based on beliefs and common knowledge.

Social knowledge is also an outcome of the dialogical relationship between the human mind and its environment. In the theories of learning I have cited above, the relationship between individual and society is a contested one, continually requiring definition. Marková (2003) however, sees *Ego-Alter* as an interdependent relationship. It is a relationship based on dialogicality, “the capacity to conceive, create and communicate about social realities in terms of otherness” resulting in a single unit of knowledge creation: “human cognition and communication is dual, always orientated both towards the speaker and the listener who adopt simultaneously the roles of active participants” (p.15). This is a mutual engagement of the phenomenon created by history and culture which Marková defines as mind (p.24).

Marková (2003) writes: “dialogicality is not about a happy end resulting in reducing tension and conflict, achieving intersubjectivity and taking the perspective of the other. In contrast dialogicality is about both a lack of tension and tension” about “acknowledgement of the other and the struggle for self-recognition” (p.116). It is this creative dissonance arising from antimonies and polarities (pp.56-7) between self and other jointly engaged in a dialectic made possible by an inherent dialogicality, which leads to change, to continual self-recognition and to self-authentication. She further states that identity is a dialogical concept emerging from interdependence and independence within the *Ego-Alter* relationship.

An important aspect of dialogicality for Marková (2003) is dialogue: “Thinking is communicable and speakable” (2003, p.90). It is through the “loopholes” (p.24) within a dialogue of oppositions and conflicts that change and the new is possible. Dialogue is perceived as an externalisation of internal dialogue and thought and it is through dialogue according to Marková (2003) that the *Ego-Alter* dialogical relationship is represented. She writes “dialogicality brings into focus the features of the self that psychology has often neglected or ignored” (p. 101) and through “hidden and open polemics” (p.xvi) new selves can be both continually generated and communicated.

Dialogue

The study of communication has become, for scholars, practitioners and engineers alike, one of the most fascinating topics of exploration in the twentieth century. After almost a century the field is still growing, expanding and subdividing into new fields. A subfield of considerable interest today is the study of dialogue. (Marková et al., 1995, p. xi)

In the literature I reviewed about both learning and identity I identified common themes such as practised identity and learning; self and learning constructed within social settings; communication, the role of dialogicality; and the relationship between inner activity and external dialogue. A key issue throughout all this literature, whether implied or explicit, has been the role and purpose of dialogue, and its connection to communication, to dialogicality and to identity. Graumann (cited in Marková et al., 1995, p. 17) whose starting point is a view of commonality and willingness to cooperate between people, notes the difficulty in providing “the full picture of what we share in dialogue either as a common or as a mutual world”. Unlike Marková (2003) whose view of dialogue is based on dialogical and linguistic antimonies, he writes that to identify what interlocutors need to share in order to enter into and sustain a dialogue is far from simple. He goes on to suggest that the ability to communicate feelings and ideas is rooted in the “mental make-up” (p.20) of a person. Furthermore, the “encompassing” culture which provides the language and rules of interaction has to be shared in order for a dialogue to be sustainable.

Linell (1979) writes “language and language use can be experienced both from inside (the participant’s perspective) and from outside (the observer’s perspective)” (p.28). He further suggests that miscommunication cohabits with communication in dialogue. Without communication, and (Linell cited by Marková et al., 1995, p. 184) the level of mutual understanding it brings, we “cannot notice and do something about lacking mutualities and apparent miscommunication”.

In locating dialogue within a dialogical framework, all of these theorists in my view, are suggesting two realities. Firstly, that dialogue represents a creative space for the communication of what Marková (2003) has referred to as the historically and

culturally constituted phenomenon of the mind and activities of the mind. Secondly, circumscribed as dialogue is by the social norms, discourses, languages and literacies of its context, dialogue is a means of transaction within social settings which offers possibilities for versions of identity.

Dialogue can also be viewed as a space for presentations and enactments of selves and for identity innovation. Candlin (1997, p.xi) makes a strong connection between identity construction and dialogue suggesting that “newly integrated voices revalue the old, creatively evidencing as a novel resource the emergence of new ideas and of discourse”. The “sites of engagement” (p.x) which dialogue represents are spaces for the authoring and construction of new identities through the critical moments within dialogue where “discursive competence” on matters of human concern, is at a premium. In other words, dialogue on issues fundamental to those taking part, and in which they have an emotional investment, represents a space where each participant can revisit and reframe their values and as a consequence forge new identities.

If the links between psychological processes and speech in social settings as a change device are not explicit in Candlin (1997), Wertsch (1991) focuses directly on the relationship between them and on the interconnection as a force for change. He suggests that if speech (p.146) provides a “crucial link between psychological processes as they currently exist and their cultural, historical, and institutional settings”, then it may also reveal important opportunities for positive change. He goes on to suggest that a “capacity to recognize specific speech genres and their patterns on privileging” provides an analytic tool “for understanding sociocultural settings and the psychological processes” associated with them.

Wertsch's (1991) blurring of the boundaries between mind and speech and action, inner and external processes, has clear implications for dialogicality, dialogical processes and relationships. It also has implications for the practice of historically constructed identities, the forging of new identities; the relationship between speech, dialogicality and identity and the transformative possibilities of speech in relation to Ego/Alter.

In the course of this chapter I have referred to dialogicality and to the individual's dialogical relationship with the environment and those within it. I have also referred to dialogue as an expression of dialogicality and as a mechanism for generating change within dialogical processes. Marková's (2003) triad (p.150) of *Ego-Alter-Object* as a dynamic unit of social knowledge where the "relations within that unit are both simultaneously and sequentially dynamic" has led me to a more precise view of dialogicality as both a catalyst and a constant dynamic.

To summarise, based on Marková I understand dialogicality to be an inherent human characteristic; an openness to and an engagement with the world. Marková, states it is "as much part of human nature as are the biological and cognitive universals" (Marková, 2003, p.91). This openness to, and engagement with, the world has at its source a constant, dynamic and generative inner process of reflection and review of selves in relation to others. Understandings of selves, definitions of selves, perceptions of selves, construction and affirmation of selves emerge from, and are developed through, dialogicality. I believe, therefore, that dialogicality is a central means through which individuals forge and practise identity.

Dialogicality is articulated through the dialogical processes of action, word, deed, improvisation and response as part of the struggles and harmonies of relationships. In

Marková's terms the combined force of self, other and social knowledge as a dialogical unit is a powerful dynamic through which changed self, *Ego-Alter-Altered Ego*, and changed "worlds" (p.173) are achieved. Dialogicality like identity, is subject to influence through the interactions between dialogical processes and the inner process of reflection and review.

Communication is a key dialogical process for the articulation of dialogicality because of the engagement it creates with others. Dialogue as an aspect of communication is a central means of voicing dialogicality. It voices both the inner processes of reflection and review and the openness and engagement with others. It is a self-making process as it enables simultaneous self-making interactions between dialogical processes and dialogicality. I see dialogue as a powerful means of constructing and practising identities and of making this construction and practice visible and therefore it is a key theme in this thesis.

Through my reading of the literature I also began to consider whether the use of dialogue as a tool for jointly constructing knowledge and for exchange in particular learning contexts meant that these contexts are sites for self-making, the practice of identity and transformation.

The literatures I have drawn on have not been confined to education. Wertsch (1991, pp. 4-5) emphasises the importance of a socio-cultural approach, of devising a framework which makes full use of "separate disciplinary perspectives" resulting in an integrated set of concepts. I have in this research, brought together diverse but related theoretical themes to form a broad base from which to conduct my enquiry, to ground my findings and conclusions and to offer fresh perspectives on learning.

In order to maintain conceptual cohesion, I chose to structure the research from these theoretical starting points and also to use them as a basis for analysing the data. In order to truly represent an individual perspective I chose a biographical approach as my research methodology. Choosing biography as an approach was consistent with my interest and focus on identity, communication and dialogue. The individual accounts of lives and learning experiences are themselves representations of identity fleeting, presented and captured.

Joining the conversations

From my reading of the literature and my analysis of current academic concerns relevant to my research it seems that there is considerable interest in the concept of identity and in connections between learning and identity. I am also aware of the current academic interest from a range of disciplines in the use of biography for the purposes of research as well as its role in identity construction. In addition, as Marková (1995) has indicated, communication and dialogue represent a major preoccupation for researchers, and the field “is growing and subdividing”. I will now review current research in these three key areas, indicating how my research relates to each set of interests.

Research into learning and identity is not a new line of enquiry. There have been a number of recent studies of the area:

Identity is a complex field, and social psychologists, sociologists, political scientists, cultural critics and philosophers all use the word variously and in different contexts. (Shakespeare, 1996).

Shakespeare (1996) for example, has written on disability identity, exploring the identity options for disabled people. Preston (1997) writing about changes after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the recent Islamic revival which have “profoundly altered the received ideas that define political cultures throughout the world”, has offered views on political, cultural and economic identity. The University of Wales is currently engaged in a project: “The Celtic Languages and Cultural Identity: A Multidisciplinary Synthesis” which explores “celticity” and Celtic identity. Lamoureux (2006) has reported on the experience of French first language students in making the transition to English speaking universities in Canada and the opportunities this offers to explore questions relating to language and identity. Diamond (2000) has explored issues of sexual identity in a recent study on women who are not “exclusively heterosexual”. While these studies relate to specific aspects or presentations of identity, my research focuses on identity construction and the practice of variable, contradictory and complex identities within a range of life contexts as well as formal learning settings.

Significant among recent research specifically on identity in learning is Butler’s (2006) work on issues of gender in learning; Pollard & Filer’s (1996, 1999, 2000) longitudinal ethnographic study of children as they move through the school years with a focus on social influences on their learning and emerging social differentiation in the secondary phase of compulsory schooling; and Gallacher’s work (2002) on the construction of learning identities by adults in Scottish FE colleges. In his 2002 study Gallacher argues that learner identities can be fragile, contingent and vulnerable to external changes and can incorporate elements of hostility to education. In his later

study (2006) he focuses on adults returning to learning in Scottish FE from communities at risk of exclusion and the development of their learning identities.

Pollard and Filer's studies focus on the identities which learners bring to their learning experience. Gover (2006) comments: "I don't believe the outpour [sic] of writing on identity is merely a bandwagon effect; there is a deeper motive" and that "learning in schools and identity construction are essentially and inextricably linked to one another". It is this link between learning and identity, based on a constructivist and situated view of identity and the part that learning contexts play in self-making, that my research seeks to explore.

Another area to which my research may contribute is to biography as a research approach. Josselson & Lieblich (1995) and McKee & Wilson's study on older people (2002) have affirmed the positive impact on research participants of reminiscence and recall of life events with another person or with a group of people. It helped they said "in building identities". They referred to other studies involving recall such as Traue & Pennebaker (1993) where disclosure was beneficial and indeed therapeutic. Conway (1977) has suggested that memory, goal structure and identity as it emerges over a lifespan are powerfully linked. Conway and Pleydell-Pearce (2000) have established a link between autobiographical knowledge, goals and narrative memories as central to "forming goals of the self or personality". All of these studies point to the potential of autobiography, and individual and collective memory for self-making. I consider that my biographical study, which focuses on the context of life events and the impact of that context, provides a means for the key participants to present and practise identities.

My research was conducted in Scotland's central belt and this prompted consideration of concepts about the use of language and in particular the use of the vernacular in Scotland. Writing on the subject of Scots, its relationship with English and with Gaelic, and on the subject of available speech options, Dossena (2005, pp 8-17) states: "options may be chosen according to a number of criteria: for instance they may be related to register selection in different social circumstances, and in this case speakers may be called dialect switchers; on the other hand, variation may be less predictable, in which case speakers may be defined as style drifters". Scots operate a "bi-polar linguistic system" (p. 14) or "dialect- standard continuum". She goes on to say that the type and quantity of Scots insertions into Standard Scots English (SSE) depends on the speakers' attitude, their relationship with the interlocutor, the topic etc." (p.15). The vernacular in her view, takes on a particular significance because of its situatedness in terms of speaker attitude and use and speaker-listener relationships. My research which has been influenced by Dossena's (2005) work also explores dialect and "switching", the use of standard Scots English and the extent to which language is influenced by the context and the relationship between those in discussion.

I will now move from the literature review to set out the methodological approach I adopted to explore the links between learning and the identities of the five key participants in my study.

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEARNING AND IDENTITY

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

We must remember that our primary obligation is always to the people we study, not to our project or to a larger discipline (Denzin, 1989, p.83).

In the previous chapter I located my research within the current literature on learning and the emerging interests of academics engaged in research on the subject. I also outlined the key theoretical concepts which informed the development of the conceptual framework which I used to generate and analyse my data.

In this chapter I will begin by outlining the trajectory towards a final decision about the research topic. An important aspect of this account will be the values and epistemology which shaped my methodological approach to the project. I will describe my field work and the methods I used to gather and analyse the data and having explained how I arrived at a sample, I will provide an introduction to the five key participants who became the main focus of my research as part of a wider group of learner and teacher participants.

Research aims and design

Some of the key principles from the literature on learning, dialogue, communication and voice which prompted my interest in this area of enquiry have also helped to

clarify my research aims and the presentation of my own identity as a researcher. Based on my reading, my aim was to achieve a collaborative approach which was dialogical, based on reflection and exchange and which would lead to jointly constructed knowledge and understandings. In particular, I wanted a model of research which would focus on the individual and would be founded on trust.

Hammersley's (1995, pp. 45-65), views on ethnographic approaches which highlight the complexities in relationships between researchers and research participants led me to want to stand alongside my research participants within a context which was, as much as was possible, a shared one. Furlong and Edwards (1986) refer to an interactive research paradigm which allowed participants to "tell it as it is" (p.54). I wanted to create an authentic exchange which would produce data about the "truths of our (their) experience" (Personal Narratives Group, 1989, p.261, cited in Riessman, 1993, p.22). In this "going native", my objective was to engage in research activity to some extent "with no more than a focus" (Furlong and Edwards, 1986, p.54), based on some guiding principles and to be responsive and fluid.

Lather's (1991, pp.50-60) notion of "catalytic validity", an advocacy research model which is collaborative, praxis orientated and results in deeper self-understanding and "self-determination", led me to think about how to use my research discussions. Ideally I wanted to encourage reflection and inner dialogue, leading possibly to creative action. While any claim that a research process in itself results in transformation is probably too grand, an approach which captures, values and respects the "subjectively articulated world" (Heron and Reason, 1997, pp. 274-294) of the relatively "dispossessed" (Apple in Lather, 1991, p. x) will I believe, "raise research participants up".

I understood from my reading, that participation in my research, like engaging in learning, might lead to change at various levels, and as an interactive activity, it had the potential to be “transformative” in itself (Heron and Reason, 2001, p. 179) affecting how participants “made sense of their world” (p. 179) and radically changing “their practice within it”. In Lather’s terms, our work together might through my agency or through the “intentional interplay between reflection and creative action” (Heron and Reason, 2001, p.179) of our discussions, possibly at least offer some sense of freedom from those “relations of dominance” (Lather, 1993) within a policy hierarchy of educational provision in which learners perceive themselves as having little say. Their major concern was to speak through me. This collaborative and dialogical research stance, through my researcher identity as a messenger carrying their words, offered for them a means of breaching what they saw as firmly laid-down principles of educational control by an establishment of change-makers, which affected them and other learners but over which they had no influence.

I was very influenced by Heron’s (1996) and Heron and Reason’s (1997, 2001) views on the dynamics within research relationships; and the importance with which they regard unspoken communication and a “felt reciprocity” (Abram, 1996 cited by Heron and Reason, 1997, pp. 274-294) in order to explore “what is intrinsically valuable in human life”, employing the full range of human capacities and sensibilities in the research process (Heron and Reason, 2001, p.180).

Heron and Reason (2001, p. 179) raise the issue of integrity in traditional research models of mutually exclusive researcher-researched roles. In these models, what is to be researched may not arise from the more urgent concerns of those being

researched. The research is organised to suit the purposes of the researcher and the participants are therefore denied in the process. However, I decided that in adopting a model of research which was collaborative and based on discussions with the participants that I would be better able to produce “personal-life documents” (Denzin, 1989, p.13). I would create “the persons we write about, just as they create themselves when they engage in storytelling practices” (p. 82). My intention is to leave “multiple images and traces of what has been, what could have been and what now is” (p, 81) and to uphold “the human dignity” (Denzin, 1989, p.83) of the five main participants and of all who took part in my research.

Erben (1998, p.8) writes: “individual identity is at the methodological heart of biographical analysis”. Autobiographical/biographical approaches to gathering data through a focus on individual lives fit well with my own values as a researcher. They also address my emergent research interests as I indicated in the previous chapter, in identity, learning and change and dialogue. Erben (1998) notes that: “the guiding feature of autobiographical research is that it attempts to suit its method to its purpose” (p.4). In adopting a research method which relies largely on narrative and validates “imagination” (Erben, 1998, pp. 9-12) for analysis, which attempts to connect the “inner world of thought and experience and an outer world of events and inexperience” (Denzin, 1984, p.66), researcher and research participant enter into a dialectic. These reciprocal and complementary contributions have the potential to deepen and become “richer in data the more purposefully we carry through the aim of the research” (Hume, 1978, p. 317 cited by Erben, 1998, p.11). My methods which were founded on trusting relationships with individuals and which required both human qualities and professional skills to enter into the inner lives of participants, I

believe, created the conditions for a very rich output about self and lives. Furthermore, biography as a means of research ensured that participants were both central and visible.

There remains however the question of intellectual authority (Hammersley, 1995, pp. 57-59). Hammersley asserts (1995, p. 61) that research relationships cannot be generally “legislated” for and will depend on the specifics of particular research investigations, I therefore recognised the need for difference between researcher and researched. One important consideration in determining the roles of researcher and researched, is the taking of responsibility for the validity of the data; another is how correspondences can be made between findings from one piece of research with a broader body of knowledge within an academy of researchers. These seem to me to be the tasks of the researcher as initiator of the project and the person who has access to this inside information.

I have interpreted “intellectual authority” (Hammersley, 1995) firstly, as bringing a relevant literature to bear on the articulated experience of participants. I have done this consistently both in the preparation for carrying out research and in the analysis of the data. Secondly, “intellectual authority” involved an awareness of my duty to represent what my full range of sensibilities, capacities and knowledge told me about participants and what they said. I believe that both a biographical method and my approach to literary representation within this thesis fulfil that obligation. Thirdly, I was conscious from the start of my research that as an HMI, I was in a privileged position of access to policy makers. The experiences of my participants had the potential to lead to a discourse about educational approaches and could be influential even in some small way in the future learning experiences of a much wider group of

learners. This potential for research to impact on policy was voiced by one of my participants: “what will you do with a’ this when it’s finished ... will it go to the education? That’s good” (research participant).

Deciding on a Topic

Both the literature on learning discussed in the previous chapter and my professional exchanges with learners through my work as an HM Inspector working in the FE sector, have led me to a view of learning as transformational through meaningful exchange between individuals involved in the learning process.

In my journey towards deciding on a topic for research, in defining learning as both a researcher and now a learner myself, it has become increasingly clear that a dynamic leading to “epiphany”, a “turning point moment” (Denzin, 1989, p. 22) was often present in certain learning contexts. It was this profound change, brought about by inspirational ideologies and charismatic others, affecting our lives and representations of our world and selves, taking us beyond anything previously imagined which I wanted to study further. While the reproductive role of learning has been recognised earlier, in my FE involvements, I gradually saw learning as a process of response and change. I recognised the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding as an externalisation of an inner deeply human activity of embracing, dislodging and surrender. This conviction about the power and presence of an inner dynamic within certain learning contexts, about the interactive relationship between selves in learning and the significant life changes which we bring about as a result of learning was what guided my choice of research topic.

A first stage in my research activity was a small qualitative study which I conducted in 2003. I wanted to see if it was possible to observe tangible signs of a learning process taking place. I concluded from the study that teaching and learning are two discrete processes; that learning behaviour and classroom behaviour are different and that there are visible signs of a learning process. The outcome of this work contributed to a revised set of criteria for the inspection of teaching and learning in Scottish colleges by HMIE and provided a theoretical context for the HMIE/SFC report *Student Learning in Scottish FE Colleges* (2004). Furthermore, it formed the basis of two assignments for my Ed.D degree.

In comparing the behaviours of four learning groups I found that certain features of learning behaviour are not age specific but relate more to the self-confidence that learners of all ages gain through positive learning experiences. High performing Highers school pupils, learning in a further education class, behaved in a similar way to a group of lecturers studying for a teaching qualification. Under-confident mature learners returning to study, (after in some cases, traumatic life events) displayed similar behaviour to young people coming straight to further education from school.

One striking feature common to all groups, was the extent to which learners and their teachers used dialogue in classroom learning. What I observed in teacher/learner exchanges was parallel sets of “referentially semantic content” and two “speech genres” (Wertsch, 1991, p. 134); an interchangeability between correct use of terminology, and correct speech registers. Learners selected the appropriate speech genre but failed to select the correct item leading to semantic inaccuracy; or learners used the correct item but used a different speech genre to that of the teacher. In some cases, the teacher rephrased a contribution from a learner, overlaying semantic

accuracy and an appropriate register where either of these or both had been absent in the learner contribution. Alternatively, the teacher would vary the “genre” or register but using the correct semantic reference, possibly in order to make concepts more accessible.

Talk among learners displayed similar semantic and speech genre variability; but I also heard an emergent language which was characteristic of their particular vocational courses. Furthermore, there was between learners, a language of familiarity and sharing. Teachers themselves used linguistic strategies in order to draw learners into discussion. Finally, I noted varying volumes of participation by individuals, in class and group discussions. My overall conclusion from this study was that dialogue and the dynamics of exchange between individuals were central to the learning process which I observed in classrooms. I also concluded that change was present in the exchange and was an outcome of it. Consequently, I decided that I wanted to research the contribution of dialogue and communication further through my doctoral research.

I piloted this line of enquiry in November 2004. I observed a Communications class in one FE college. Using an observation schedule I attempted to explore the extent to which dialogue was central to the lesson I was observing and its role in whole class and small group interaction with the teacher. I also listened to the exchanges within small groups and noted how much each member contributed to these small group discussions. I subsequently interviewed six volunteers from the class together, followed by a discussion with the class teacher.

Since my plan at this stage was still to research dialogue in learning for my doctoral project, I had also at the same time, made an approach to two colleges where I

planned to undertake the field work for the doctoral research. However, although feedback from the pilot confirmed the centrality of dialogue in certain learning settings, such as the HNC Communication course, for example; I came to realise that my approach had been too circumscribed and did not provide opportunities for exploring the role of dialogue or its links with personal transformation in learning. I had already at the pilot stage arranged appointments to visit my prospective colleges for the doctoral research. I therefore used this first meeting with senior staff as a means of exploring both my initial and developing thoughts.

Burgess (1984, pp. 3-5) puts forward the concept of the interactive process of research, where continual monitoring of the research design and the research process leads to modifications throughout the project. The productive interaction between both the pilot project and the start of my doctoral research lasted from November 2004 until February 2005 when I started my field work. This was a period of continual modifications to plans, to my research focus and to my methods of gathering data. The continual changes also involved a sizable community of managers and practitioners who helped me to refine my thinking. By February 2005, I had refocused my research topic and plans in order to explore notions of transformation.

This stage was a highly collaborative process. It was an ongoing cycle of reflection, inner dialogue, changing perceptions resulting in both a changed dialogue and changed activities. My perception of our work together was to a large extent one of interdependence within a community of planners and independence of perceptions and interests. Arguably, the research project itself was the outcome of a dialogical process. The process generated the project in its final form and was also intrinsic to

my method. We were committed to the notion of transformation through learning; and managers and teachers were convinced through experience about the long-term life changes that learning brought about. This was particularly true in their view of courses designed to attract adults. There was also a consensus in terms of dialogue as a means of bringing about change and college staff were clear about the courses where dialogue was used as a pedagogical approach to encouraging learning. My decision to explore the relationship between learning and identity as the topic for my research was then an outcome of these productive discussions with peers.

The Research Agenda

“Research should refer to lives in such a way as to illuminate them in relation to a research objective” (Erben, 1998, p.12)

My reading and my initial research led me to want to explore further the relationship between learning and identity since I had identified some connection between them through the literature; and through my experience as well as that of other professionals I was aware of the potential that learning has for personal transformation. More specifically I wanted to know, to what extent were the identities of the five key participants made or practised in the learning process; what was the role of the learning process and classroom environment in terms of their identity and self-making; to what extent did learning in these specific learning contexts have an impact on their self-making; to what extent did they feel comfortable in their learning contexts; how much did they change through learning?

I chose to undertake my field work in the FE sector in Scotland because of my understanding and experience of that sector and because I wanted to discover whether I could find evidence of the relationship between learning and identity through the study of a small group of learners in particular learning contexts in that sector. As I was particularly interested in the potential for learning to be transformative I decided to undertake my field work with adult students who were undertaking training and learning linked to achieving qualifications which would enable them to gain entry or achieve progression in particular professions. Therefore, I undertook my research with a group of individuals learning in an HNC Social Care course and an Access to Teaching course who volunteered to participate in my research.

Hodkinson (2005) and Colley et al. (2003) have raised important issues in relation to the contexts in which learning takes place, focussing for example on the workplace as a learning setting. My choice of environment for my field work meant that I did not explore the workplace as a place for learning. However, I was able to observe that the four key participants undertaking the HNC Social Care course used learning from their practice to broaden and deepen their classroom learning, and this was encouraged by their teachers.

In order to consider the potential of learning to be transformative I recognised that I needed to study how learning had affected the lives of the learners who volunteered to take part in my research. I decided that the best way to do this was to use a case-study approach.

The questions I asked participants were: firstly, what were the life events and relationships which in their views had made them who they were? I asked this

question in order to be able to infer what the participants' perceptions of their own identities were, the factors which they identified as having led to self-making and change in their lives, what portrayal of themselves did they want to convey to me through their narrative. It also allowed me to consider in the terms of Holland et al. (1998) how far identity was constructed; and were there any permanent aspects of identity?

My second set of questions to participants were specifically related to learning: what did they understand by learning and its purpose, how did they define learning, what were their expectations of learning, how did they locate learning within the overall context of their past and present lives?

Thirdly, I wanted to know how learners thought they had changed as a result of learning in specific FE settings, what impact did they think learning had on them, how well did they fit into their classroom groups, how comfortable did they feel? From these discussions I would be able to infer what aspects of selves as represented in their narrative were consistent or different within the learning context, what were the factors for change in the learning context, what were the indicators of change within their learning context?

Preliminaries for the field work

My aspirations for a collaborative and hierarchy-free approach to my research was in direct contrast with my HMI role. My first task was therefore to establish, through my way of acting and through dialogue, a new identity with colleges; one of collaborator in a joint endeavour. This identity would have to emerge from the more

familiar identity and expectations of an HMI. Both this new persona and my methodology, had to be forged from within an existing and historical context of expectations of behaviour and of relationships. Burgess (1984, p. 47-51) sets out the ethical issues in gaining access to research sites and in engaging with research participants. Gaining access to colleges, because of this national role, was not a difficulty but gaining access in order to conduct research, with clarity as to role and purpose was a different matter. Burgess (1984) emphasises the importance in the first instance of negotiating at different levels. My negotiations involved creating a new working code of practice and a new relationship with managers and teachers where we both established fresh boundaries and discussed any possible barriers.

My HMI identity also proved helpful in that mutual trust was already established with the colleges and it was recognised that I could be relied on to handle confidential and sensitive information appropriately. Knowing college infrastructures, being an “insider”, already meant that I could merge with the norms and discourses of the institutions. There were few barriers in terms of practices, language and concepts. The senior managers of the two colleges communicated their confidence in my ability to relate to staff and students by leaving me to find my own way after initial introductions had been made. However, I also had to be clear that I would view whatever I found as a researcher not as an inspector. I used dress and to some extent speech as a means of differentiating my roles and identities.

Published information about the FE sector show that the provision of courses for adults returning to learning within the sector is extensive and growing. Therefore I had a wide choice in deciding which colleges to approach in relation to field work. The final decision about which colleges to approach was a pragmatic one. I chose

two colleges I knew well, which in recognition of time constraints I could travel to easily and which offered courses specifically for adults returning to learning.

Sampling

The two college principals with whom I discussed the research both involved a senior manager from the college to maintain oversight of my research activities and to liaise between teachers, students and me. I followed the initial visit by written confirmation of the purpose of the research and how I would undertake field work which I sent to both Principals (Appendix 1), (I used e mail for one college and a letter to the other). Thereafter, my transactions with the college were with the designated senior manager, or teacher, with whom I shared my interview plans and topic sets and negotiated visits and interviews.

Arrangements about appointments and visits were jointly agreed and constantly revised. Managers pre-selected the classes for my research activity in the light of discussions about learning as transformation and changing lives, and the use of dialogue as a pedagogical approach. They had also chosen classes where teachers would be receptive to the research and would feel comfortable as participants. Both classes, the HNC in Social Care and Access to Teaching, were in their view designed to attract adults who were seeking a life change by achieving a qualification in Care or who, from a starting point of no or few qualifications, had decided to gain university entrance to become qualified teachers. Their view was also that dialogue was a strong feature of both learning contexts. I paid three visits to the Social Care class in one college and two to the Access to Teaching course in the other. This was

a period of orientation, building connections through speaking to participants informally and inviting volunteers to take part in the study. At a very early stage (in a group discussion), I told learners if they did volunteer, the whole process would involve a maximum of two to three hours of their time and they could choose to withdraw at any time (Appendix, 4).

After these preliminaries, eighteen individuals volunteered to take part in one college (college 1) and five volunteered in the other (college 2). Neither I nor college staff intervened in this self-selection process. I knew, however, that (since we were operating within timetabled class hours in both colleges, and students were employed outside class times or had personal commitments); two one-to-one meetings with every individual who came forward would not be possible in the period from February until June. There was also the matter of forthcoming selection interviews for the Access to Teaching students, preparation for this interview and a debriefing and support period afterwards which was sensitive and during which I would not visit.

In college 1, the volunteering process took place at the end of the first lesson I observed. Students were anxious to get away and so I wrote down names and agreed to set dates for meetings the following week during class times.

In college 2, four people volunteered at the first meeting of the class I attended and dates were set for individual meetings. At the end of my second visit, two other people came forward who had not been there on the first occasion. Before this second visit, I had interviewed two of the four volunteers and a third person sent an apology saying that she no longer wished to go ahead. Because of their other commitments which unexpectedly occurred on the days when I could visit, I

eventually saw four individuals twice, Anthea, Bob, Evelyn and Freda who then became key participants because I was able to address both issues of identity and learning with them. I saw one individual Kathleen, on one occasion and her views on learning served to confirm or otherwise the views of those I had seen twice.

During my second visit to college 1, it was not possible to take up class time to make arrangements. I interviewed one volunteer, Catherine, of the original eighteen who came forward at the end of the class I had been observing. Arranging appointments in this college generally though continued to prove difficult for varying practical reasons. Caring responsibilities, assessments, unexpected snowfall, university interviews, and the management of the interview timetable by the teacher concerned, who as "gatekeeper" (Burgess, 1984, pp. 48-50) knew the totality of individuals' commitments, their sensitivities and their ability to participate. This meant that dates were agreed and then postponed or no dates could be agreed at mutually suitable times. One particular concern of the teacher's was the outcome of the selection interviews for acceptance into B.Ed. degree courses and the reactions of those who had not been successful. Sensitive to these issues, and to the teacher's wish to oversee the process, it was possible to interview Catherine for a second time, and she then became a key participant. I met Claire, Kara and Elaine once and so the outcome of these discussions as with Kathleen in college 2 served to confirm or otherwise the views of the key participants.

When the interviews for selection for university places were over, I was able to meet a learner focus group in college 1. This was arranged by the teacher. Sixteen of the original eighteen volunteers in that college attended. The total sample from college 1 was one key participant, Catherine, with whom I had been able to discuss both issues

of identity and learning; three additional participants, Claire, Kara and Elaine whose views were helpful in confirming or otherwise the views of the key participants and whom I met once; and a learner focus group. From college 2 the total sample was four key participants, Anthea, Bob, Elaine and Freda with whom I discussed both issues of identity and learning; and Kathleen whose views confirmed or otherwise the views of this key group. The number of key participants from both colleges eventually settled then at five.

It is clear that each college responded somewhat differently to my research requirements. In one college there was more flexibility to meet learners than in the other. In college 1 my initial visits were followed up by telephone discussions about who had volunteered and who might come forward, about students' commitments and any sensitivities which I should take account of. In college 2, after the initial meetings, when dates were arranged, I dealt directly with students. I was clear that I had to conduct my research activities within the different contexts of each college. Having outlined my research plans and objectives to both, in discussion and in writing, my role was to respond to each college's interpretation of these; and to collaborate with participants within these parameters and understandings. This collaborative process, together with my own sensitivity to the individual circumstances of participants, an unwillingness to impose or breach codes of behaviour, the practical obstacles and the constraints of time both on me and on students, were how I arrived at my final sample.

Sample size in biographical/autobiographical research according to Erben (1998) is "dictated by the purpose for which the research is being carried out" (p.5). Popadiuk (2004) in writing about the feminist biographical method in psychological research

emphasises the richness and importance of data gained from listening to individual cultural stories. What she values as a feminist researcher is the flexibility of the in-depth interpretative methodology described in Erben (1998) and Denzin (1989). Her own study (2004) exemplifies this phenomenological approach and like mine, it involved five participants. Using Erben (1998), and Denzin (1989) as an ontological research stance, in gathering her data and collecting “personal-life documents” (Denzin, 1989, p.13), Popadiuk (2004) used the field work as an analytical process in itself. Where she adopted a progressive/theoretical sampling approach in reaching her conclusions, my approach to establishing findings was cumulative, proceeding from one account to the other, arriving at understandings and comparing perceptions of each new account to preceding understandings.

By not setting a firm timetable, with a determined number of participants at the outset, by being continually open, flexible and responsive to the richness of each story, by using a conceptual framework which both informed the field work and the analysis of data, I was able to blend the gathering and analysing of data into one process, “in concert” (Erben, 1998, p.4) with the aims of the study at the time of engagement as well as afterwards. I was able to respond to emerging data and analyse its content as it unfolded.

The period of the fieldwork lasted from 28th February 2005 to 2nd June 2005. The opportunity to request more volunteers remained continually open to me. However the richness of the data I gathered from each individual about their lives and my approach to the research which was to focus on the identity of each individual in the learning context meant that I did not feel that “novel clues” (Erben, 1998, p.6) were necessary.

A reversed paradigm which focuses on “single cases” (Erben, 1998, p.6) and not sample sizes to offer patterns from which we can generalise has also been suggested by other researchers. In her work on adults in higher education Haggis (2002) argues for seeking out the truth in individuality in learning rather than attempting to identify generalisable trends in adult learning behaviour.

Gathering data and the question of validity and reliability

During the period of my field work, I visited both colleges almost weekly and conducted twenty interviews; two, with the five main participants; one with a group of learners, and one interview with each of four other participants as described earlier. I also interviewed three teachers; two from the HNC Social Care class and one from the Access to Teaching class. I interviewed one teacher from the HNC Social Care class whose class I had observed twice and I interviewed another teacher once at his request, who also taught the class but whom I had not observed with the learners. I interviewed the teacher from the Access to Teaching class twice. All the narratives were recorded on tape and subsequently transcribed (Appendix 7). I also made field notes.

I used several approaches to gather data (Erben; 1998) on both identity and learning; these included observations, and semi structured discussion (Appendices, 2 and 3). Classroom observation as a background activity provided me with information about the context and structure of the participants’ learning experiences, the extent of and types of use of dialogue by teachers and learners, and social groupings of learners

within the learning settings. It also provided a helpful meeting and starting point for the individual discussions on biography and learning settings which followed.

After these initial observations, the principal research activities began. The first of my discussions with each of the five key participants, Anthea, Bob, Catherine, Evelyn and Freda, focused on their life histories and lasted between sixty and ninety minutes. Denzin (1989) defines the biographical method as the “studied use and collection of life documents, or documents of life which describe turning points in individuals’ lives”. I had invited the participants to bring something, “live documentation” (Erben; 1998), with them if they wished. Not all did. Evelyn brought a family photograph and a recently assessed piece of coursework; Freda brought a folder of poems she had written; Anthea brought two poems about caring she wanted to discuss. The photo which Evelyn brought led us into discussions about her family, the mining community she lived in and the miners’ strike which had been such a turning point in her life. Her essay provided insights into an evolving learner identity and the impact of learning on her life. Freda’s poems provided insights which she wanted to share into her feelings and thoughts about the abuse she had suffered, her recovery from a mental breakdown and her relationship with those for whom she cared in her professional capacity. The poems which Anthea brought, and with which we started our discussion, offered two messages: one that she wanted to present a professional identity of carer and the other, less intended maybe, identity of someone who was emotionally fragile.

The first discussion, prompted in some cases by these “documents” (Erben; 1998), started from one question: “Tell me about the events in your life that have made you who you are today”. My set of concepts derived from Holland and Lave’s (2001)

definition of history-in-person (Appendix 5); Erben's (1998) and Denzin's (1989) work on interpreting biographical data, acted as a guide to these semi-structured discussions and ensured consistency through a set of topics drawn from the literature. For example, my conceptual approach focused our discussions on "local contentious practice" (Holland and Lave; 2001; p, 6) of self within the different life contexts participants described; and how "enduring struggles" (Holland and Lave; 2001; p, 3) or absence of struggle, had led to the construction and forging of self (Holland et al.1998).

My conceptual framework also directed our discussions to the wider context of these life events; the importance and impact of the political, economic and societal context; the changing values of participants within their cultural systems; the relationship between local contexts and public events and how the responses of participants to their local context and to national and social events influenced their self-practice and self-making (Holland et al.1998). These were concepts I had gathered from Holland and Lave (2001), Holland et al. (1998), Erben (1998) and Denzin (1989). I was also constantly conscious of the impact of inner speech leading to inner activity and action on which Marková, and Wertsch (1991) base their theories on the role of dialogue. Finally using Riessman's (1993)'s view that in order to understand the messages which research participants wish to convey, researchers should analyse the content and structure of their accounts, I was able to use such a process of interpretation as an approach (Denzin; 1989 and Erben; 1998) both throughout and after the interviews.

My second discussion with Anthea, Bob, Catherine, Evelyn and Freda and my first and only interviews with the learners' group, with teachers and with the four

additional individuals all lasted for about an hour and all focused on learning, its purpose and impact. These were semi structured discussions. I used topic sets (Appendix 2 and 3) all designed around a core agenda which comprehensively addressed the key research questions. The agenda items were also “grounded” (Bechofer and Paterson; 2000) in the literature and emerging academic interests which I reviewed in the previous chapter.

My claims to validity are based on Mishler’s (1990) validation theory and how they apply to my research; and also on Riessman’s (1993) view of reality and truth. I will firstly discuss the validation of my research with reference to Mishler (1990) whose views are most appropriate to my task and to the values and methodological approaches represented in this research.

Mishler’s (1990) view is that the concern of researchers should be to recast our approach to “validation” (p. 416) of enquiry-based research, to see validation as an ongoing and contextualised activity of the social construction of knowledge: “the key issue becomes whether the relevant community ... evaluates reported findings as sufficiently trustworthy to rely on them for their own work” (p.417). According to Mishler, validation is therefore “situated” within communities and contexts of professional practice “embedded” rather than a “separate and different type of assessment” (p.419). What is important in his view is the degree of trustworthiness ascribed to a particular set of data and the research process by a wider network of practitioner/specialists, their interpretation of them, and whether or not they are sufficiently convinced to act on the research activities.

In order for the research to be sufficiently trustworthy for a wider network to enter into an iterative process regarding any claims, and to take further action based on the

outcomes of the research, transparency in terms of the research method, data gathering and analysis processes and how conclusions are arrived at are necessary. In other words, “the visibility of the work: of the data in the form of the texts used in the analysis, with full transcripts and tapes that can be made available to other researchers; of the methods that transformed the texts into findings; and of the direct linkages (shown) between data, findings and interpretation” (Mishler, 1990, p. 429). My thesis and engagement in relation to the research described in the thesis will, I hope, draw those researchers I have referred to in my review of the literature, who are working in areas similar to my research interests into this discussion. My hope is that this research will also lead to further enquiry into these areas of shared interests. More broadly however, my intention is that the high visibility of my research activities within this thesis will continue to draw a wider network of academics into discussion, thereby validating the research process.

Central to my research has also been my engagement with practitioners and colleagues at a preliminary stage, throughout and subsequent to the process. I have adopted at every stage a strategy of sharing evolving perceptions and the key literature which has shaped them. I have made my research approaches, the process and instruments for gathering and analysing data and the guiding concepts and sources of theory, as well as the findings themselves widely available to relevant professionals in the FE sector. I have discussed in particular the context of my research, the nature of the interviews, the questions and relationships which were all aspects of the biographical approach which I adopted to my research. I also demonstrated how I interpreted the data from participants’ narratives. These formal and informal exchanges which I initiated with those in the field in order to ensure

trustworthiness of the research process proved to be an iterative process which led me to altered understandings and new insights which I re-integrated into my research work. These discussions have also given rise to debates about learning within my own organisation.

I have already indicated how some of my early work in relation to this research influenced the development of the HMIE framework for the inspection and review of Scottish colleges. It helped to create a focus on learning and teaching in inspection methodology focus and meant that secondary matters such as equipment and accommodation are now inspected and reported as contributory factors. Since the framework for review by HMIE is public and is used by colleges for the purposes of self-evaluation and self-improvement against shared criteria, this changed focus has also had an impact in the sector. Such has been the confidence of practitioners in my research which I have shared through presentations, workshops and advice, that the dissemination has led both to individual reflection and a change in systems and practice in the classroom. For Mishler (1990) research is a generative activity for wider practice. These conversations on learning and teaching as part of, and resulting from, my research, which have extended over a two year period, with policy and HMI colleagues, with academics and most particularly with teachers in colleges, are now being regarded within HMIE as an area for further development in which it has been decided I will play a leading role. They also represent I suggest, a broad and continuing construction of knowledge by a wide network leading to action and change.

A second issue is reality and truth within personal narratives. Riessman (1993) argues that story telling is both what we do with our research materials and what

informants do with us. It is a means of conveying what they want us to know; a way of “claiming identities” and a means of giving structure to life experiences and their perceptions of them. Their narrative gives reality a unity and coherence; and truth lies in that very process. The Personal Narratives Group (1989) which she cites say that in talking about our lives, we are conveying the truths of our experience. It is these truths of experience rather than the elusive notions of absolute truth or indeed reality, which I am aiming to report and interpret. My analysis therefore consists of an interpretation of interpretations, affected by the circumstances and contexts at a particular moment in time which could have been interpreted differently by someone else. In addition, the individuals’ stories could have been presented altogether differently to another researcher. The analysis, a mere fixing of sparkles in the light that was, is one in a range of “means by which identities may be fashioned” (Rosenwald and Ochberg, 1993, p. 2).

In concluding this section on gathering and analysing data I want to point out how the dialogical processes, in particular dialogues, that I have entered into with academic and professional peers as the project evolved and the “vigorous debate” (Mishler, 1990, p. 438) we have had over the issues have added to my understanding of the connections between learning and identity. Also, it is important to say that in the absence of a standard approach to biographical methods of research I have developed a theoretical and methodological framework both for gathering and analysing data to suit my research aim (Appendix 5).

Analysing the data

there is no truth in the painting of a life, only multiple images and traces of what has been, what could have been and what now is. (Denzin, 1989, p.81).

Like my varied approaches to gathering data, I have approached the analysis of my data in different ways using a combination of interpretation and “imagination” (Erben, 1998, pp. 9-12), making connections between statements, ideas and events and systematic analysis. This approach allowed me to capture the complexities and disjunctions of individual difference in selfdom and in self-making. At the same time the method of analysis provided a systematic means of identifying answers to the research questions and of forming further questions arising from the data.

There were two approaches to the analysis process. For the analysis of individual identities based on the narratives of the five key participants and their accounts of what events had made them who they were, I drew heavily on Riessman (1993) who writes: “individuals construct past events and actions in personal narratives to claim identities and construct lives” (p.2). She also argues that narratives are in themselves interpretative, and constructed in such a way as to convey certain messages. As a researcher then, I was subject to what “informants” (Riessman, 1993, p.1) did with me.

In constructing the opening sections of the following biographies, I first provided a factual account in chronological order. Then using the conceptual framework referred to previously, I analysed the structure and focus of the narrative. I also used a “constant comparative method” (Silverman, 2000) in analysing participants’ use of language in terms of identities presented, enacted, envisioned. I proceeded from one

account to the other, arriving at understandings and comparing perceptions of each new account to preceding understandings. In Denzin's (1989) view, language is a glaze through which to see into the "window" of a person's inner life. I therefore drew on Dossena (2005) as a means of interpreting the language used by participants and in particular their use of the vernacular. The outcome of this analysis is described in the third section of each biography. The last sections of each biography summarise my conclusions about the identities of Anthea, Bob, Catherine, Evelyn and Freda and show how my findings in some respects coincide with Holland and Lave's (2001) and Holland et al.'s (1998) theories on identity and also raise new questions.

My second approach to analysing the data on learning which emerged from the second discussions (with the five key participants, and from interviews with their teachers, with the learners' group and with the four additional participants) was to compare the views of all participants systematically in relation to: their understandings and definitions of learning, its purpose and their expectations of it, classroom relationships, how they felt about others in the class and how comfortable they were in their learning settings, what evidence of change they saw in themselves and what factors had led to change. Working with the data from each of the five discussions in turn, I noted commonalities and perceptions which were individual.

I applied the same constant comparative approach to the data from group discussions, interviews with individual learners who were not key participants and interviews with teachers. I continually cross-referred across sets of data from each as well as referring back to the conclusions from the previous data from the five key participants. Classroom observations which had been so helpful in launching the discussions also provided further data in which to contextualise and compare these

views. This method of analysis allowed for generalisation in relation to these common themes and for identifying difference.

Although my approach to analysing the identities of the five key participants was consistent through use of a common conceptual framework, the first set of conclusions on identities and self-making were the outcome of my own interpretative approach to data analysis. It was also an interpretation of participants' interpretations of the realities of their lives as they perceived them and my interpretations of their interpretations were themselves open to further interpretation by those with whom I have shared the research.

The second set of conclusions on learning, change and transformation was equally interpretative but this approach required more intensive comparative activity. I recorded the perceptions of the five key participants, identified what was common and what was different, and these views were confirmed or contradicted by the views from the wider group, including teachers.

A third stage in analysing the totality of the data was to relate and compare the set of findings on identity to the other set of findings on learning and change; to fuse the "imaginative recreation of the quotidian" (Erben, 1998, p. 12) on the one hand with a straightforward comparison approach on the other. The first phase consisted of reaching a view of how the identities of the five key participants were forged and practised, of what aspects of their identities were permanent, what remained hidden and what was forefronted at certain times. I also reached a view in that initial phase of how these participants built selves. I was subsequently able from my analysis of the second set of data to form a view of the identities of these participants, and of how they constructed selves, in their learning settings. I was able to identify, what

aspects of self were visible; how they went about their self-making; what changes were apparent or in progress; what the factors for change in learning settings were; and how findings from these data compared to data from interviews with teachers and other learners. This cross-referencing allowed me to address the central research topic which was to explore the relationship between learning and identity.

Riessman (1993, pp.8-15) in describing the levels and sequencing of representation of a primary experience writes “all texts stand on moving ground” (p.15). My moving ground is the literary genre of this thesis, of live presentations, ongoing discussions as a professional speaking about learning to practitioners and to colleagues and above all, the validation of this research through what I hope is a changing understanding of learning among those with whom I have and will discuss it.

Hammersley (2003) writes: “messengers are travellers across borders” and researchers will have to be aware that they act:

in a field with diverse players. They must focus no longer on the academic subject and its paradigms but look beyond that borderland between research and policy-making to something altogether much broader. It is their dialogue to frame; to exchange legitimacies across dialects and customs in a multicultural world and in a multilingual environment (p, 25).

This sociocultural study (Wertsch, 1991, pp.4-5) is the individual act of both a researcher and traveller. My borderlands have been those boundaries between researchers, policy makers, research participants; between learning, research and practice. I have journeyed across them as a methodological approach. This research shows the transformative impact of learning on the lives of five people. As a piece of work my hope is that it can speak across those boundaries.

In conclusion

In this chapter I have identified and discussed the methodology I have used to set and address my research questions. I have explained my choice of methods in the context of research questions. I have provided an account of the criteria for selection of sites for the field work and the research sample. I have outlined my systems for gathering and analysing data. I will now turn to the five key participants and their individual accounts of the life events, of historic and current contexts where they were able to practise and build their identities.

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEARNING AND IDENTITY

CHAPTER 4 BIOGRAPHY, IDENTITY AND SELF-MAKING

In this chapter I will represent the identities of five people. My objective is to pinpoint some key features of selves “practised” (Holland and Lave, 2001, p.271) and constructed in different contexts and at different periods of their lives. I also aim to identify the events and relationships from their histories which in their view have been significant for self-making.

The lack of a standard approach to analysing biography, together with the need to make sense in a consistent way of these life accounts, to ensure comparability, and trustworthiness and lead to sound conclusions, posed some problems.

Therefore, to enable comparisons, I will follow a set structure, presenting my analysis in three sections. The first section will consist of a chronological account of the lives of each participant. The second section, based on Reissman (1993) will deal with the narrative: its content, its structure and focus and any significant linguistic aspects relevant to the analysis. The third section provides an analysis of the identity and self-making of each participant in relation to the theories set out within the theoretical frameworks described in chapter two and expands the discussion. It is important to say at this stage, that I had asked the participants to identify what events in their lives had made them who they were. They recounted experiences or

happenings in their lives which they thought were significant, neglected others, re-ordered the sequence of events and at times returned to one particular event.

In the final part of the chapter I will broaden the discussion; building on the similarities and differences between these individual accounts, I will attempt to draw out some general principles surrounding the construction of a self in relation to these five key participants.. The next chapter will focus on individuals' views of learning, and their relationship with others in their learning groups. In forming a view of the role and significance of learning for them in their self-making journey, within a further education environment, I think it may be possible to reach some conclusions about the relationship between learning and identity specifically in relation to the five key participants in my sample.

The Biographies

In compiling these five biographies, my objective was to "refer to lives in such a way as to illuminate them in relation to a research objective" (Erben, 1998) which was to what extent were their identities made or practised in the learning process; what was the role of the learning process and classroom environment in terms of identity and self-making in relation to these five participants; to what extent did learning in these specific learning contexts have an impact on their self-making; to what extent did these learners feel comfortable in their learning contexts; how much did they change through learning?

As I embarked on this project, I was conscious that "there is no way to stuff a real-live person between the two covers of a text" (Denzin, 1989) and that attempts to

represent these participants can never do them justice. Furthermore, any conclusions about their identity could be no more than both tentative and true at a particular moment in time. What I witnessed and heard was a collection of impressions and an imprint of real and possible histories which was and then was no more.

My analysis of what I discovered through my interactions with these people is ongoing and dialectical. In the same way as they are embarked on a process which is ever-live, so my written statements about them are ever open to discussion, to interpretation and to change (Riessman, 1993).

To conclude, both my postmodern and feminist stance allow me to live with inconsistency and to view my participants as active, unrepressed individuals rather than “targets of research” (Lather, 1991).

Anthea’s Narrative

Content of the Narrative provided in a Chronological Order

Anthea is 43. She was brought up in a mining community in the west of Scotland. She had two older brothers and a younger brother. Her father was a miner and then came out of the pits to run a pub with his wife. She left school at 15 in order to care for her father, who suffered a stroke, until he died in 1978. She cared for him alone as her mother continued to manage the business during his illness and after his death.

She met and fell in love with Danny and set up home with him. She brought her grandmother with her to live with Danny and cared for her until she died. She also cared for his mother. She lived with Danny for fourteen years but finally asked him to leave their home because she could no longer live with the consequences of his gambling addiction. Danny moved and took up residence in a house near her and they remained close and involved in each other's lives. Therefore Danny's sudden death was a shock to her and she suffered a breakdown soon after.

During her life with Danny, in order to make a living, she took a job in the construction industry. The firm relocated to London and she moved and worked there for a short time but then decided to return home to look for another job. At this time she gave some support to a friend whose mother had died of cancer. This experience brought back her previous experiences caring for her father and grandmother and so she applied for a post caring for people in her local area in the central belt. At the time of our discussions she was seeking an HNC qualification in Social Care and was attending college on a part-time basis.

Anthea had many other interests. She had been a competition dancer when she was young and therefore loved music and going to rock festivals. She had artistic interests and had a friend who was a sculptor. In addition, she had a love of the countryside, walking and animals.

Structure and Focus of the Narrative

What Anthea wanted to convey to me was her identity as a carer. Her structuring of both interviews placed a focus on this aspect of her. This theme pervaded most of our

first meeting. It recurred throughout our first meeting and it was the context within which she described the major relationships in her life. This caring role was further evidenced in the content of her narrative. While it was chronological in parts, it was rich in contextual information. She dwelt on feelings and reactions which suggested her caring role was one of the main ways in which she perceived herself. It also suggested a person who had a large capacity for feeling; whose response to the needs around her, to those of her mother, father and of significant others, was an emotional one; a person who had a capacity for empathy. Most importantly, she conveyed that she was well aware of her central role in her own self-making; that her actions and decisions played a significant part in building a self.

Another focus in our discussion was her ability to integrate into and absorb several contexts. She spent some time discussing her life in the construction world and her ability to survive in a man's world. This ability to be "one of the boys" together with her "tomboy" days as a child directly contrasted with her role as a carer. Much later in our discussion she spoke about her love of animals and nature and her enjoyment of art which she found through Danny and her own (now latent) talent for dancing and love of music.

These identities and aspects of self she introduced only in the second interview. It occurred to me that our increased comfort with one another led her to want me to know her better. Her later introduction of these other aspects of herself indicates possibly that she did perceive herself principally as a carer and that was the identity she chose to present. There were however, alternative identities, a more private part of her, which she inhabited, developed, presented or neglected, as she judged fit within her different contexts.

In her reflections on her life she saw herself as someone who was self-reliant; drew on her own resources, was very open to new experiences and to being changed by them; and was particularly responsive to learning. She said that her life was a journey which enthused her.

Linguistic Aspects

Anthea increasingly used the vernacular in her narrative. There is a marked difference between her language in the first few stages of our first discussion and that in our second discussion.

As I explained in the literature review, Holland et al. (1998) describe “practised” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 271) identity as “subjectivities” (Holland and Lave, 2001, p.286) which are shaped through the struggles of living within specific contexts both social and “local” (Holland and Lave, 2001, pp.6-7). Anthea’s changing language in her descriptions of life events and relationships was representative I believe, of both the practice of a self and a response to her history. Dossena (2005) identifies the significance of the vernacular within a broader linguistic context.

Both Anthea’s frequent, often lengthy, statements about her mother and her use of the vernacular at particular stages in her account and a more formal language at others, suggests that this relationship was very significant in her self-making and that it was fraught with “enduring” contradiction and ongoing struggle (Holland and Lave, 2001, p.7). The struggle had been, and continued to be, significant in the daily forging of Anthea’s identity. She appeared to be caught between what she felt, what she thought she should feel and what she could decently present or admit.

She used the vernacular and an informal code to describe the lack of bonding between them; to articulate her need for a cuddle and having to come to terms with a mother who was never there at times when she was hurt or needy. By way of contrast, her language was formal and neutral when explaining her mother's absence when needed, and when speaking of looking after her mother in her old age. This she refers to as "a privilege", a duty and honouring a unique relationship.

On the one hand, she carried a great deal of anger, disappointment and unarticulated hurt in relation to her mother; on the other, she put forward well-rehearsed explanations for a behaviour which left her vulnerable and, possibly as result of that uncertainty, open.

Her strength of feeling, articulated through the vernacular, was evident in her descriptions of Danny and his death. And in speaking about him, about what he brought to her and what they shared, it was clear that these were intimate aspects of a self that she developed through him.

Her language showed the emotional and self-making significance of these two relationships but the ebb and flow of it also showed her ability to move herself on through self-objectification and distance. She was able to transcend her conflicts and inner turmoil, and achieve a language which was neutral. In our discussions she displayed an ability to move from a code and personal language which evoked the darkest periods of her life to a place of linguistic harmony with me, through shared concepts and language.

Identity and Self-Making

She lived through the Thatcher years in a physical and cultural environment which was very much a public arena where the politics and social turmoil of those times were played out. Interestingly she made no mention of these public events as important in her self-making but it would not be unreasonable to suggest that they were a key factor. The playing out of the social shift and changing ideologies in the 70s and 80s in Anthea's family and local community and her responses had made their mark. The pub probably bought I suggest, as a reaction to a disintegrating mining industry during the seventies, became her mother's central focus; the effect of this on relationships in the family was profound. Her mother's involvement in the pub affected Anthea's relationship with her mother. It led to deep bonds with her grandmother who "made her who she is today" and also placed her in the position of having to give up school to look after her father: "there was no other option bar to look after him". This response to her circumstances, possibly an inner one, as well as one externally imposed by family or local culture represented a space where her identity could be forged through her interaction with the people and events which were part of her context at that time. As an active force within her family and community life she brought yet another influence of "cultural forms" (Holland et al. 1998, p. 5; pp.271-272) to that situation which was in itself a place for self-construction and for "shaping subjectivities". Some of the factors which she perceived to be significant in her life, caring, death and loss of loved ones, had indeed led to the making of her identity. However, the import of not just a chain of events and interplay between people, but the dynamic which she introduced through her response to each context, was a key factor for the making of self.

Her response to external circumstances represented the downplaying of a dream or an envisioned identity, making way for a more practical but resourceful self. She left behind any romantic or personal aspirations and approached this much less attractive reality with creativity and stoic dedication. It was a reality where she learned to move herself led by “hope, desperation or even playfulness” (Holland et al., 1998, pp.6-7) and where most of all she had learned the ability to improvise when required. Within the margins of time and space of her existence, herself a historical and cultural product, she coped with the loss of academic opportunity, of getting married in Spanish lace, of personal loss and death, and became the various selves she described. She looked to other worlds and possibilities to build her “I” (Holland and Lave, 2001, p.10).

She made choices about use of language, about how she presented events and she showed metal and a strategic approach to her life. She was capable of being independent, was quick to spot opportunities, and to take action and move herself on. She “organised, formed and re-formed” her selves and sets of actions (Holland et al., 1998, p. 270) at various points both at an intimate level and in the wide and diverse social environment which she inhabited. Her decisions to become a professional carer, to work in construction, to move back from London, to ask her partner to leave were all examples of self-direction in her un-ending journey of self-making. Her breakdown itself and slow recovery can be construed as both disintegration and a re-constituted identity. And all of these represented not just a skill and ability to improvise but to truly renovate.

Her concept of self-making as a lifelong process and of her identity as open-ended and unfinishable, in my view also demonstrated a light-heartedness. Strategy was a

feature of her self-direction and her considered recklessness in her exploration of other worlds. There was a frivolity both in her moving in and out of irreconcilable and dispersed selves and contexts as well as a delight in the doing of it. "When Danny died I'd went up to visit and it was brilliant..it was exactly what I needed to sort myself out... I would go out to the studio and he would be sitting and he'd be footerin' about and daein his work.. I like to be in that sort of environment, I was quite good at art at school ..this sorta drew me back in". She had put aside her dreams as we have already seen in favour of pragmatic responses to life events, but these playful forays into other worlds of fantasy and imagination, displayed her enduring openness to being "colonised" and incorporated (Holland and Lave, 2001, p. 14) as part of another future.

Anthea's contradictory self-understandings and inconsistent and varied identities indicate identities which are practised, non-permanent and volatile. She was also a mix or "composite" of different identities (Holland et al., 1998, p.8). There were aspects of Anthea which were dispersed and fragmented but others that were "durable" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 8).

There was a consistency in Anthea's story telling techniques. She made effective use of silence, allowing two poems to say all that she could not bring herself to say about the experience of being cared for as an old person and caring for the old. She carefully chose her words and what information she wanted to impart at each separate occasion. This was strongly evident in the sudden disclosure of her artistic interests in the second interview. She almost had an intuition that I would never have thought it from looking at her. She also showed great skill in her choice of linguistic register, terminology and sentence structuring; she summoned the formal as she felt

was required. This was the general tone of the first interview. The second was generally less formal.

Certain themes are also consistent such as the “tomboy”, the caring aspect of her which she enacted even in her class group, her emotional responses and her continual struggle in relation to unsatisfactory and lost relationships. And there was also, in speaking about her mother, about her partner, about her professional role and her relationship with her employer, a consistent pattern of emotion breaching the professional, reasoned overlay. She combined this with assertiveness: “I have always had to be assertive – even before the illness”.

Denzin (1989) suggests that we must see beyond the tools that people use for creating texts and accounts; we have no choice but to interpret them. These broad consistencies in her construction of selves, central both to her and my understanding of her, at times related to identity; and at times they were thematic and linguistic. They were sturdy anchors in the moving waters of self-construction involving making choices and taking actions which felt right. They suggested durability but did not though fix her in any predictable mould.

Consistent with Holland and Lave’s view, Anthea was very much an active participant and essentially strategic within her context. She demonstrated this in her account of her life and certainly in her orchestration, where possible, of our discussions. She described herself as fully participating in different worlds. Indeed her contexts were so at odds that one of her neighbours called her a snob. She worked in a Care home for the elderly. She combined this with full integration in her college class and an avid interest in late-night Open University art programmes. To use Holland’s terms, these were concrete examples of negotiation and social

identification (1998, pp. 271-272) with new and unknown individuals, groups and norms as well as personification and integration. They were a result of her own manoeuvring. She was reactive and sensitive to these roles and contexts, and had learned from them; more from some than from others “there’s some of them in the class, I’ll say, that’s no me ... Sometimes I feel the pupils are very me..”.

To use Holland’s and Lave’s terms, she demonstrated that her contexts and those people within them had been part of her self-making but also that she had maintained control of this transformative process and its potential. This “internalised cultural logic” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 9) made up of voices and “responsiveness” (1998, p. 272), and constituting a space for authoring a self, moved her to take on a caring role, to ask Danny to leave, to return home from London. It was she who determined the situations which were turning points for her. Even when situations arose such as Danny’s death over which she had no control, she took actions which resulted in planned transformations, for example, her return to and active involvement in light-hearted artistic production.

Identity construction according to Holland and Lave (2001) relies predominantly on accident and transience. However, in Anthea’s account of her life, I was always conscious of someone who was aware of her own self-making as a feature of her day-to-day life. She had considered and taken account of her contradictory roles. She was aware of her different selves in relation to other people. She had also reflected on the disjunctions in her different selves and her own self-perception and projection of herself principally as a carer. Alongside her consciousness of her own role in self-making, she was clearly someone who was always alert to the opportunities that other people and events presented in terms of her project. Holland’s theories (1998)

on identity and those of Holland and Lave (2001) do not place sufficient emphasis on what impels Anthea and others like her.

Anthea had the ability to improvise based on an ever-present directive voice. Hers was self-directed action arising from an inner process of reflection, review and response. Her mission was constant change to an unknown end; through growing and evolving self-knowledge as a result of inner dialogue, exchange with those around her and an awareness of, and dialectic with, different worlds and communities around and beyond her but within reach.

Bob's Narrative

Content of the Narrative Provided in a Chronological Order

Bob is 25. He grew up in an all boys' military boarding school in the Scottish Highlands. Bob loved school, often not wanting to come home; he attributed his "not going off the rails" to the effect of his education. His father had served in the forces and was rarely at home; and had Bob lived with his mother rather than being at a boarding school, he claimed he would not have been so disciplined.

However, having tired of school, Bob left at 15 after gaining Standard Grades and came to college to do Highers. He had one brother, five years younger, with whom he had a very close relationship. His brother had just left the Merchant Navy to join the Marines. His parents had met while his mother was in the Navy and his father was in the Royal Marines; but after 22 years his father left the Navy and became a

Marine Reserve, living at home with his sons and wife. It was then that his mother had been diagnosed with cancer.

After leaving college, Bob intended joining the Marines but then decided against it and went to Rhodes where he worked for 4 months in bars and restaurants. As a result of that experience he changed his mind about joining the Forces and instead on his return home, he went to college, gaining an HND in Sports Management. He had planned to continue his studies and become a PE teacher but he “couldn’t be bothered doing another two years”. He began to think again about joining the Marines. While at college he worked for two summers in Baltimore in Camp America.

He started a relationship with Donna when he was 22 but he had already signed up for the Army. His mother had been diagnosed with breast cancer 2 years earlier. He went on to the Army, where he worked in Army Intelligence, and left after 6 months because of Donna. He had decided to leave because Donna had suggested that their relationship was suffering. This decision had given rise he says to some ongoing conflict between them, and as a result their relationship had been and still was unsettled. Donna represented different values and priorities to those that he grew up with and he had a sense of being a different person with her than with his family.

On his return from the Army, he picked up various odd jobs including working in the morgue in the Glasgow Royal Infirmary. A friend encouraged him to apply for a job in a residential home for adolescent boys where he worked when we met. He was studying for an HNC in Social Care as a part time student. He found that his experience of studying for his qualification in Sports Management had helped him in his current studies. He had considered undertaking a degree in Social Sciences with

the Open University, but was also considering joining the Army reserves or the Territorial Army.

Structure and Focus of the Narrative

Unlike Anthea, Bob's account focused more on individual biography and factual information and his account contained less overt emotional content. One interpretation of this is that these factual issues were significant to him in terms of who he was. The experience of being at a military school during the Falklands war and the war with Iraq in 1992 with relatives in the armed forces, meant that government decisions about going to war had had a direct effect on him. Throughout our discussions he referred to his social and political environment and he was outspoken about the Thatcher years and subsequently the new Labour Government and their impact on his life. Another view might be that this chronological and factual account was altogether safer ground for us to discuss in the aftermath of the very emotional life event of the death of his mother. Most likely, both were in some ways true.

But the most striking feature in this narrative was the continual reference to himself as author of events and of change itself. He used phrases such as "I decided against it", and "I couldn't be bothered" in terms of continuing with his studies; and he "made a decision to leave" and join the Army. However, he was very clear that none of these willed events were part of a grand plan. He did not see them as trigger points. Nonetheless, whereas with Anthea, there was often a clear indication of her responding to life events such as her father's illness and Danny's death, by contrast,

Bob's life seemed more self-directed. His decisions were usually based on what he wanted next or about responding to a need within him. For example, he talked of wanting to develop more through his work and he was thinking of changing his job.

A significant exception to this had been his mother's death and his response to that. It was not within his control and it appeared to have unsettled his attitude to relationships, particularly with Donna, and to have prompted him to reconsider his career aspirations: "this (the death) is probably the biggest trigger ... in my life ... My Mum was always a sort of major anchor, you know what I mean, in my life".

This very significant event had changed him from being in control to questioning what to do next; to wondering what to retain and what to leave behind. The option of joining the Marines continued to tantalise him and he acknowledged that it would have provided him with a means of escaping issues and realities that he could not resolve, e.g. the death of his mother.

Holland et al.'s view (1998, p.270) is that identity is a central means by which selves and the sets of actions they organise, form and reform over personal lifetimes and in different social and historical contexts. This is certainly true of Bob who stood at the epicentre of actions which would result in change. He was the architect of his experiences after leaving school. He interacted and existed, he told me, comfortably in all his different contexts, which required different sets of actions and even different ideologies. He was equally at home in Camp America with middle class American children and in a residential children's home for deprived, abused adolescents. He had adapted with a struggle to his working environment and furthermore was considering doing residential care somewhere else or a degree in Social Sciences.

Such fundamental change and adjustment to such diverse environments with very different ideologies and values, such rapid and fundamental shifts in identity, can only be accounted for in terms of inherent dialogicality and a dialogical process. That is to say, the ongoing dynamic between inner processes and externalised activity resulted in changing perspectives and understandings which guided his actions which themselves caused changes in thinking.

This dialogicality, resulting in an externalisation of inner activity based on reflection, openness, and communication in relation to a context; a dynamic between Bob's thoughts and actions, was accompanied by an ability to "improvise" (Holland et al., 1998, p.276); acting and thinking in the different situations and cultural systems in which he had opted to operate as in, for example, his choice of career or his decision to live with Donna. His understanding of self was one of change as a result of these "spaces for authoring" (Holland et al., 1998, pp. 271-2); and what he described in relation to himself in these situations was an evocation of other previous or neglected identities or selves. His mother's illness and death, which was one event he had not organised, presented yet other challenges. In his state of "questioning" and turmoil following that event, he was very much aware of these tensions and disruptions.

His then had been a self-making journey. In Holland et al.'s (1998) terms which I previously referred to in the literature review, his identity and self-making had been a process of "moving himself" although not according to any "rational plan" (Holland et al., 1998, pp. 6-7), from being very firmly located within a certain cultural and ideological context to a number of unknowns. His history had consisted of a random exploration of identities while at the same time, it was an exploration or attempt at authentication of the self which had emerged from an institutional structure, social

relations and a set of values. This he had done as both a reflective and active individual. At the heart of his ongoing conflicts, whether to stay or to move on, powerful inner activity and voices (Holland et al., 1998, p. 272) were at work. As a “collection point of socially situated and culturally interpreted experiences” (Holland and Lave, 2001, pp 18-19) on which all his life events, his responses to them, his professional life, the freedoms of living in Greece were imprinted, an inner process placed him under review, balancing these identities against his own perception of self.

Linguistic Aspects of the Narrative

Bob’s utterances were short by comparison with Anthea’s; some of his sentences were more interview-like in essence, rather than an expanded narrative where he was the raconteur. Bob’s language also varied less in terms of modalities, register or tone and he required prompts. What he said about classroom interactions was helpful in understanding this tack. His approach was to “sit back at times ... thinking about it, rather than jumping straight in” and giving an opinion; to be diplomatic. He chose to hold back rather than be judged by classmates who did not know him.

The lack of flow and spontaneous talk suggested someone who was under-confident and unsure as well as someone who was at a transitional stage in his life. However, there were times when the factual developed into expanded segments of narrative where he was clearly speaking about issues of importance, either because of the conflict and turmoil they brought about, or because he felt deeply about them. These

issues had been catalysts and had affected him to the point of bringing about changes.

One such example of expanded narrative was the space given to his relationship with women and his developing understanding of them; his coming to terms with them and his addressing of equality issues. The changes in this area of his life were major for him. He said he had changed greatly since he was in the Army and attributed many of his attitudes to that time in his life. He referred to women as an unknown species when speaking about coming to college. He called the care sector “a female dominated workplace”. He joked about male supremacy as a topic for discussion with close friends. What he described and what I witnessed was a change in attitudes and behaviours, as well as a shift, but not without difficulties, in relation to culture, orthodoxy and values. There was a sense of comfortable exchange, as well as a found detachment, from the views on women he shares with his friends in the pub. As a professional carer and a better informed learner, he had moved beyond the culture and military background of his youth and upbringing.

Bob’s narrative lingered on close relationships. These were arguably spaces for authoring change. Two such examples were the difficulties with his fiancée Donna and with his father. Bob said that personal development comes from career rather than friends or family or life experience. He was therefore very conscious of change in his life and self-making as a concept. But from my perspective, he had not taken sufficient account of the impact on him of relationships.

These two complex relationships played more of a part in his self-making than he admitted and certainly took up significant space in his narrative. Both his relationship with his father and with Donna were marked by conflict, especially in relation to his

constant indecision about returning to the forces. His relationships with both his father and with his fiancée were areas of contestation and struggle and they represented spaces for change and self-making.

His father and Donna represented different and conflicting cultures and value systems: one an environment he had moved beyond and questioned; the other an environment he had chosen and moved towards. He was simultaneously in conflict with and comfortable with both. His father and Donna had each led him to review his own identity and to negotiate those changes leading to the building of his "I". Confronted with his father and with Donna, Bob had made decisions about incorporating aspects of these "marked others" (Holland and Lave, 2001, p. 14) and standing back.

He spoke about relating to his father in terms of "an ongoing project". This suggested adjustment and change. He talked of the new factor of having to take account of Donna since they had begun to live together. Again this suggested altered behaviour as well as shifts in his thought and his cultural system. These two people, more than anyone else, were causing him some internal debate. Life in the armed forces was his point of connection with his father but it was also what divided them. The father, signed up again and the son, was in a state of indecision. It was Donna who was at the root of this. It was she who not only altered his attitudes to women, his approach to life and his lifestyle, but who also had raised difficult questions in his mind about the forces, challenging the culture of a lifetime and the allegiances of childhood. Bob had at least engaged with some of these issues. His deliberations about staying with Donna rather than escaping to the marines were a deliberate act of self-making. They

also represented an evolved set of cultural convictions in contrast to the roaming phase of earlier years.

Bob's mother had been the driving force in his and his family's life. Their relationship had been compelling and straightforward. Similarly, his relationship with his brother was close and uncomplicated; they both required little of him. Unlike his father and Donna, neither demanded change. He, his mother and brother were part of a common history; culturally there were in harmony; but, having been suddenly "deserted" by his mother, these were a set of circumstances he was now considering abandoning. In signing up again, his father represented a perpetuation of that familiar context and made Bob's loss of his mother more vivid. His turning point, as he saw it, lay not in joining the marines to escape grief, but in throwing in his lot with Donna.

Bob devoted large sections of his narrative to his professional life. He also dwelt for a large portion of his account on what he called "actual learning" in his current college, rather than previous learning experiences which had been less interactive and more mechanistic. They focused on assessments and examinations rather than the learning process. In writing about narrative analysis, Riessman (1993) suggests that we cannot ignore the interaction between narrator and interviewer in the joint production of a story. He knew I was interested in learning and its place in his life, which explains this focus. But it may more interestingly reflect a deeper commitment which is greater than in his personal life of family relationships and life with Donna. Bob had already stated that career has a greater impact on "who you are". For him then, learning and career – one flows from the other – are possibly where he is

wholly present, alert and open; identity and self-making are by implication, associated with them rather than with his primary relationships.

In relation to career he dwelt both on the similarities between his work in a boys' residential establishment and his school experience and more importantly on change. It was struggle, he said, which led to learning and a changed ability to act professionally in relation to the parents of the boys he cared for. Learning was an equally important issue for him. His motive for attending college was for personal and career development. In other words the self-making possibilities through discussion and interaction would counter what he referred to as stagnation.

Identity and Self-Making

I have referred to Holland and Lave's (2001, p. 6) view of identity as historical and "contested in practice" in my review of the literature. Bob's identity had been formed by immersion within a context and an ideology which was consistent and pervasive and which strongly shaped his view of life. It had been constructed by the deeply intensive experience of a common ideology. Teachers were all of the same view. They supported wars in Iraq and the Falklands as did the parents and pupils of the school. Practices, expectations and behaviours mirrored those of the forces leading to Bob's former unquestioning acceptance of the doctrines of Conservatism and school. The culture of home and school were identical. He spoke of competition among school friends as to whose father had been called up to serve in the Falklands War. He spoke of the elitism of the Army which he shared. Consequently, his identity had been constructed in those early years by these values and ideas. In terms of self-

making this experience had been formative. He was very much a product of his military upbringing. Bob's discourse was saturated with references to the military. He began his story with an account of his father, the Royal Marines and the forces, as a context for his childhood. He mentioned the forces as a constant career possibility and as an escape from dealing with grief. There was apparently no struggle in the "forging of identity" (Holland & Lave, 2001, p. 3). There was no disharmony between him and the environment of his early and teenage years nor did he in any way impose difference or a contrasting view on his context. He was so at one with his environment he felt no need to escape to his home setting. His identity and his self-understanding were very much a product of that environment, not through "ways of participating in the production of ongoing struggles" (Holland and Lave, 2001, p. 3) but through assimilation and identification with it.

Harmony and conflict had both been instrumental in his self-making. His mother with whom his dealings were smooth and untroubled had been a strong force for self-making. His dealings with his friends were harmonious and where there was difference he grew and built his "I" (Holland and Lave, 2001, p. 10).

It was only at a later stage that struggle appeared in his life as a creative opportunity for self-authoring and this was played out in his relationships with Donna and his father. In talking about different things to his father and contrasting the relative merits of a life at home with Donna against life in the Marines, I suspect a deeper transformation was taking place; changes to his values, cultural stance and identity through a process of inner activity, of review, questioning, and openness to dislodging of self.

In Holland and Lave's (2001) terms, these "orchestrations of the practices of others" (p. 15), of father and partner had been instrumental to his evolution and growth. Although struggle was a feature of Bob's life, it is clear that his identity was a product of both struggle and harmony. Conflict and searching for answers were features of his late teens and twenties as he explored what he knew of himself. This he did by putting himself often "playfully" (Holland et al., 1998, pp. 6-7) into the unfamiliar and seeking perhaps to make the familiar strange. Equally history, culture and a prevailing social context were significant formative factors.

Holland et al's (1998) definition of people as "composites of many often contradictory, self-understandings and identities whose loci are often not confined to the body but spread over the material and social environment" (p. 8) is as appropriate to Bob as to Anthea. He said of himself that he acted differently in different company. As a professional, a role which he had learned, he presented himself as protective and non-judgemental. He said that in his learning group he strongly asserted an authoritarian approach to people management. He was different people with different women in his life, with Donna, his mother, and with certain female class members. He was different again in what he chose to say about women to his friends. But his upbringing and the values and culture of a military outlook were strongly consistent themes. Holland et al. (1998) present identity as a much more constructed and dispersed phenomenon than Bob understood his identity to be.

Bob raises interesting issues. Both a fixed identity on the one hand, and on the other, a forged, ever-changing identity and different selves were evident. While he journeyed and searched there was nonetheless a "durability" (Holland et al., 1998, p.8) which was fundamental. The possibility of returning to a military life, his

starting point and home in a sense, was always an option which he considered whenever a decision had to be made. That option featured, for example, after his mother's death, when he left school and when wondering what his next steps would be after gaining Highers at college.

His motivation to move on, to learn from experience was also constant. I have argued that this self-direction was part of his self-making but it may well be that it also reflects an awareness of not being where he felt he really belonged.

What was also constant was a reflective and review process which accompanied and motivated his self-directed actions as part of his self-making. It is this dialogicality which I think is so central to Bob, to his self-making and identity. Like many of the other participants, he is preoccupied with self and identity, but what distinguishes him is the extent of questioning and internal activity which is at work. He has shown a marked dialogicality, and continual interrogation and self-objectification when confronted with new realities; reaching or struggling with new self-knowledge, often resulting in change.

My view, based on this account, is that his identity is constructed and practised. My conclusion is also, however, that some features or aspects of his identity, are permanent. There is in Bob, a durable and reliable aspect to identity, fixed amidst the changing landscapes of aspects of self which are fleeting, adaptable and flexible. I can also say that there are occasions which are within the control of the individual, in this case Bob, when what is durable can be replaced in favour of something more desirable.

Catherine's Narrative

Content of the Narrative Provided in a Chronological Order

Catherine is 35 years old and a mother of three children aged five, seven and eight. She left school at 16 without completing her A levels and got a job in order to be independent of her family. She had a poor relationship with her mother who was an alcoholic and she was resentful that her father had not been stronger in the home and more protective of her and her brother. She told me that when she came home from school no one spoke to her but a carton of pot noodles and a spoon were waiting for her on the table while her father watched television and her mother was in a drunken sleep. She also spoke of loneliness. Other children were not allowed to come and play in her house because her mother was thought to be "weird". She said that her brother had since cut off from his parents and she spoke of her anger with him because of that. She was determined, she said, to establish a different pattern of family life for her children. Although she was sure of her parents' love, in her childhood there was no fun, no holidays and no laughter.

Catherine valued her privacy, preferring to discuss general or professional issues. She described her irritation in class when others took up class time by opening up discussions which were, according to her, totally irrelevant. She was unwilling to listen to other people's life stories.

She also had strong views about her upbringing and about parenting generally which she articulated more than once. Encouraged by her husband, she had recently returned to study for apparently a variety of reasons: the desire to set an example for

her children; a need within her to avoid regrets and to achieve; together with the fact that those she mixed with she told me were academically well-qualified.

She had undertaken a one year access course leading to the B.Ed. at university and to a career in teaching. She felt much supported by her husband. But she also talked of what she saw as a heavy responsibility to make the most of this second chance. Sometimes conflicting needs and resulting time pressures left her feeling both constantly guilty about her children and anxious about the way she was perceived by college staff; but she was determined to succeed. She spoke of teaching with idealism and reverence; using the word “inspiration” and saying that good teachers are “priceless”.

Structure and Focus of the Narrative

Catherine saw herself as the key person in recreating an identity which she had chosen after reflection and which she continually attempted to present in a coherent way as an act of will.

Her children, her marriage, her independence and her friends, she said, had been crucial in that self-making. She made a direct link between the process of identity making, and the result, the person she presented herself as being. They were not, she said, a result of fate or happenstance. She chose to marry the man she was with. It wasn't luck she said and she became irritated with those who said she was lucky. She was proud of what she had achieved and felt she had “built it ... from scratch”.

She felt that she built her life after missing out on opportunities earlier, because of her background. She was confident of her new position and felt that with the support

of her husband she could reach her goal of a university degree and a teaching career. Her view was that her life began when she married. There was nothing before that, or at least, nothing that she could control or which she invested in. It was only when she committed to Gordon that she was able to present herself anew, and make decisions about friendships, career, context and lifestyle. She distanced herself from her mother by locating herself linguistically with her husband. She used “we” when speaking about her and her husband in relation to her mother, disowning her past; a past however which was also a part of her but which she was unwilling to admit. It was only, for example, at the end of our first interview when I had switched off the tape recorder and the environment had been made safe, that disclosures about her childhood emerged. They were clearly unpremeditated.

The effects of her mother’s alcoholism continued to affect her and her decisions. Her reactions to being isolated from friends when she was young and being bullied governed the home life she had created single-mindedly for her children. Her responses to her children’s experiences and needs had been marked by what she found so painful in her own childhood and as a result she did things differently to avoid a repetition of history. Her parents showed no interest in her problems but when her children encountered problems with their friends she was empathetic. In recalling feeling ignored as a child, she said that she would never do that to her own children.

It was clear that she had launched a personal project of recreating herself. Her response to a past that dogged her and marked her was to try to create a totally new self and another life a world away from it. She was on the run. But I had a strong sense that her painful and disturbing history lay just below the surface of her new

life, threatening at any time to engulf her once more and to destroy what she was working hard to put in place. Her mother's alcoholism had been a constant in her childhood and had continued, in her view, to affect her children. Strengthened by her husband's support, she was able to confront and minimise the effects on her family. Her struggle was to keep her past, and all the feelings it dragged back, at arm's length where she could objectify it.

Holland et al's (1998, p. 8) notion of identity as something which is composite and contradictory is very relevant to Catherine. There were many aspects of her behaviour and account of herself which demonstrated contradiction and a lack of cohesion. Hers was an identity which was practised and constructed in different situations and at different periods of her life. There were a number of disjunctive "versions" of her which were most notable in relation to selves before and after marriage.

I found contradiction also in her narrative and the structuring of it. Both revealed acknowledgement and denial in equal measure of the effects on her of the past. In the first interview she provided a summary of her family context, her learning environment and her past, only hinting at difficulties: "she (her tutor) wouldn't know anything about me as a child, or a person, or what I've been through to be sitting here today. But there are very few people that actually do". She then quite unexpectedly breached these safe boundaries and took us both into the uneasy terrain of disclosure.

The presence of her daughter during the second interview ensured a more guarded event throughout. Introducing a third party into our dynamic and one whose age and relationship to Catherine would limit the scope/nature of our discourse may have

been both a conscious and unconscious act to protect her from further exposure of her feelings both to herself and to me.

She constantly affirmed her control of her destiny; she was acutely aware of her painful past and its potential to dismantle the life and self she had created. She was rational and sanguine but emotionally fragile, easily destabilised and she required protection.

She was a contradiction in other ways too. She said that she saw teaching as a vocation implying a calling and a deeply held desire to take on the lofty role that the word implies. But in the second interview she was less idealistic, saying it all started with her husband's remark about needing to do something other than ironing and cleaning; and stating that it's "ideal because it means I can be a Mum and work at the same time". These two explanations about career choice suggested compromise and pragmatism on the one hand and idealism on the other. Both were aspects of her. She spoke of being excited by teaching. This was different to another statement she also made about her interest in a job involving children. There was then a marked difference in her rhetoric and in how she described her thought processes. Contradiction and different selves do not always suggest struggle. In Catherine's case though, often contradiction represents an ideal on the one hand and an ordinary or disturbing or unwilling reality on the other.

The study of Sociology, Philosophy and Psychology represented a tantalising world which beckoned to her, but she had to contend with the mundane account of her fellow learners' life stories in those classes. This both frustrated and irritated her. There was also a contradiction in how she felt inferior within her social circle of

friends, lacking in confidence in a new and different learning group, yet fiercely proud of what she had made of her life thus far.

Linguistic Aspects of the Narrative

Nor was her dialogue consistent. Where some of it was a learned language battened down and honed by generations of professional people using a particular common terminology and code, she breached it in flow and language, and in doing so there was a fleeting glimpse of identities forsaken in favour of an identity sought. This was not a question of vernacular or Scots as with Anthea but more an issue of vocabulary and register.

Within her narrative she juxtaposed different languages, codes and modalities (Dossena, 2005, pp.8-17). At times she used language which was essentially personal while at certain others, she chose phrases, terms and tones which were neutral. In making this linguistic differentiation, she sought currency. It was a means of participating within a social framework which she valued and to which she aspired. Both discourses represented different identities or different inflections of aspects of Catherine. They were also telling symptoms of her internal struggles. When she spoke about learning she used “off-the-shelf” terms which evoked text books, the media and education reports. The examples included “the politics of children in class”, “enabled”, “personal advantage”, “diverse” when referring to her class mates. Her replies to my general questions consisted in short, formal utterances. However, when my questions became more personal and penetrating, focusing, for example, on the extent to which she felt valued by her tutors, her language was colloquial.

She felt guilty about both her children and her college work. When she described the conflicts and pressures of running a home, the illnesses of her children and the conflict that doing things that benefited her created for everyone, she expressed this in a distinctly personal way. Her utterances became disjointed, less formal, shorter and less flowing.

Consistent with Dossena (2005)'s views on the linguistic adjustments which people make to context, topic and interlocutor, her intention was to impress. She wanted to present as someone on the road to success, using a voice that would have a currency in my terms as she saw it. It may also be that she was trying to send positive messages to herself.

Identity and Self-Making

Catherine was determined "to better herself" not just academically but socially as well. This was played out in the counterpoint of her language. She wanted this betterment for herself and for her children. She wanted a degree, a profession and she wanted to open up those possibilities for her children. She wanted to bring her children up in the professional environment she had created so as to ensure them a respectable future. She was very watchful and conscious of those in her immediate circle and their academic achievement. At times they made her feel inferior, but they also represented a community of which she and her family could, through her, become members. She therefore strived all she could, through a process of identification, to fit herself for entry and acceptance.

She was impelled onwards by a strong mental energy which helped her overcome any obstacles to that aim. In the learning situation she described herself as a leader to whom others looked up. In her family life she was the key decision-maker in terms of where they live and the children's education. She was reflective about meeting and overcoming every challenge.

On every front then, despite the struggles, the process which she had begun for herself had been one of re-engineering and transformation. Catherine wanted the identity she had chosen for herself and she saw this as a real possibility. In order to forge that identity she had created order, effected change, and rejected what interfered with that vision: "I don't really have to listen to all of that because it's not relevant today".

Consistent with Holland and Lave's (2001) notions of "colonisation" (p.14), Catherine had marked out those who were able to further her cause. She had identified those from whom she could learn to become an acceptable professional and those who would not further her project of self-construction and re-fashioning.

I stated previously that the course she had chosen was a fast track one leading to a teaching degree and therefore the purpose of the course is not just to help people gain qualifications. It is to bring about those changes which will prepare them for a profession and a lifestyle. Catherine said that the tutor looks at the overall picture and if she can see you in the role, then she is supportive and will really "push you into that and give you all the encouragement and support you need ...I think if you're not quite what she envisages is the right person for a role, then she's maybe steering you". This view of her tutor indicates Catherine's perception of her tutor as a key person in her securing a university place and being selected by an interview panel.

She had undertaken a journey of identity and self-making and had chosen well those whom she wished to accompany her on it. They were collaborative in that enterprise, with Catherine in full control. She was unwilling, she acknowledged, to accept change from those she did not like or respect. She had reflected deeply and acted upon suggested change from others. Her husband's suggestion had led to a significant life change and opened up extensive possibilities. She had acceded to her tutor's suggestions, allowing herself to be led towards the image of the person they both wanted her to be; receptive to suggestions about moderating traits of personality by building on her strengths and playing down areas of weakness. She did this while retaining full control of the re-modelling process and using her discretion in terms of her own privacy.

The constructivist view of identity in Holland and Lave (2001) and in Holland et al. (1998) does not sufficiently represent the power of the "phenomenon" of mind. I saw in Catherine an internal mental energy which impelled and steered her in all her contexts, and affected even her dialogue. This was a force which filtered and conditioned what she saw as acceptable and what was to be vigorously rejected because it did not accord with a continually evolving inner vision of which identity was ultimately desirable.

In understanding Catherine there is a fundamental dilemma. History and circumstances had clearly been significant in shaping her contradictory selves. But she also possessed an ever-present dynamic energy to guide her logic, to school her feelings and to evaluate the effect of reflection on the actions she took. It was this energy and thought, themselves products of her identity, which led her to pursue a single identity to the exclusion of any others. This identity was a self-made artefact,

rather than any product of history or culture; an output from her immediate environment only. This vision of a willed identity was predominant in all the situations she located herself in. She actively structured much of her life. She constructed her own context, and she combined her intimate and personal world with the collective spaces and social relations which constituted her life (Holland et al., 1998) in order to generate an artefact and stage a self.

Moreover, Catherine had a somewhat “culturalist” (Holland et al., 1998) and fixed view of identity as given rather than constructed (p.27). There were occasions in her narrative where she would not dwell or expand. She was unwilling to enter those grey areas of boundaries and contradictions where definitions are unsustainable. For example on the question of self-perception her single message was that she was coping. There were times when it was clear to both of us that she was having some difficulty in doing this. But this discussion was off-limits. She also said very little about her role in helping others in her class to learn, about multiple engagements and conflicting interactions, or openness. She was rather, more focused on her central controlling role in the change process as it relates to her.

Her descriptions of herself suggest neither a constellation of selves nor a person in constant motion, but a single shooting star on a predetermined path. She was reticent about learning from others. She talked about keeping to the point and she left undeveloped my notion of broadening of the mind as a focus for learning.

These are all indications I believe, of an identity which is not “forged” through working “creativity” (Holland and Lave, 2001, p. 9) resulting in an “altered subjectivity” (Holland et al., 1998, p.18). There was no sense of improvisation or openness here, no moving on which was unplanned, irrational, playful or

exploratory. For Catherine her essential identity, I believe, was a created projection of the mind, derived from “social representations” (Marková, 2003) and about which she had made certain decisions. This was an identity which had been arrived at through a process of interpretation and selection and which had coherence because it was an artefact of the mind rather than tried, evolved and “contested in practice” (Holland and Lave, 2001, p. 6). It was an identity which she was in the process of imposing on her local context.

Catherine was a willing participant where events, relationships and experiences corresponded to what she wanted for herself. “Figured worlds” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 41) where frames of meaning and interpretations of human actions are negotiated (1998, p. 26) represented an opportunity for her to achieve her objective. She was skilful in ensuring that her representations of self, and her agency were all recognisably and reassuringly teacher-like and acceptable to that profession. Furthermore, in her self-moving, she had increasingly positioned herself on all fronts to be able to interact and socially identify with a world which was not yet hers but which she could envisage, deconstruct and embrace. If during her childhood, there was an increasing turning away from her context, there was in her life since leaving school, a willingness to dislodge some parts of herself. She did this to accommodate other aspects, observed, imagined and played out as a mother and parent; and to become in all possible respects, a teacher.

In considering Catherine, the issue is to what extent are identities constructed through chronology or local contexts and to what extent can we irrespective of our local and wider environments, forge new selves. Certainly, she herself linked history and identity when she referred to her earlier years; but to what extent we can

minimise unwanted occurrences in favour of a greater destiny, lifestyle and role which is cut off from all practicalities and realities is an interesting discourse.

Denzin (1989) writes about turning point experiences and epiphanies (p.22) as significant in the making of self. The turning points in Catherine's life in my view were her childhood, her marriage and her children. Her childhood and relationships with parents, friends, brother, caused a clear moving away from a lifestyle and set of values to a radically different one. Her dynamic with her husband represented a significant trigger for her because it raised issues about "incorporation" and "not-in-me" (Holland and Lave, 2001, pp. 14-19), in relation to what was around her – other Mums, their social circle and her husband himself. Most of all it was a major turning point because of the inner debate and the strengthening of that inner voice in her self-making project.

Within both the environment she inhabits as well as the contexts she has left behind, Catherine is constantly dialogical, though selective in relation to engaging with others; reflective and consequently active in relation to otherness. It is dialogicality which is continually articulated I suggest, which leads her to reject or assimilate people and their views. Change and stability (Marková, 2003) both feature in her identity and self-making. What is both stable and consistent about her identity is not the "sediment" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 18) from her past; but a life lived on the boundaries between identities rejected and an identity willed.

Her inner speech, if strength, anger and vulnerability are expressions of it, was strident at its most confident, powerful at its most tentative. It was in evidence constantly throughout her narrative. Hers was I think, an ongoing conversation, the

principal purpose of which was to enact successfully a creation and to obfuscate an unwelcome reality.

Evelyn's Narrative

Content of the Narrative Provided in a Chronological Order

She is 46, married to a former miner from a mining family, whom she adored for the "wildness" in him. He had worked in the mines for twenty two years and loved it. Her own family by contrast were not part of the mining community. She lived with her husband and children in what had been a thriving mining community until the political conflict of the eighties, and the miners' strikes, which adversely affected them and the wider family. Her son and daughter were very young during this period of great financial hardship: "I resented living absolutely skint every week..."

She was unable to make any financial contribution to the home because she had no help with childcare. Eventually with Christmas coming, she found work in a local warehouse in 1987, two years after the end of the strikes. She remained in the job for 16 years, her husband having retired from the pits for health reasons. She attended a night class in Psychology and Sociology at the college where she was currently pursuing an HNC in Social Care. Around the same time she took up a post in a residential care home nearby which she loved.

Unlike her husband, she had an unhappy childhood. Clinical depression was a strong feature of her family history and of her own growing up. It affected her mother who also suffered from agoraphobia. Evelyn herself had suffered from post-natal

depression and her daughter has suffered from depression for a period of three years. It had been a desire to know more about depression that drew her to the Social Sciences. She had not been close to her mother. She described her mother, a school dinner supervisor, as “emotionless” and unwilling to engage with those around her. She had been close to her father who was very open, sociable and affectionate and who compensated through his generous personality for the otherwise bleak home atmosphere. He encouraged her at school, especially in her artistic ability. But despite the aspirations of her father and her teachers, she left school at 16 because she lacked confidence in dealing with her school environment and in moving to Art school. She stated that in order to leave school she provoked a confrontation with a staff member and walked out. Tellingly, she said she remembered tears in her art teacher’s eyes as he watched her leave.

She had two sisters, one of whom she was close to who has become a successful professional and a brother. She described herself as quiet and reserved but as “coming out of her shell” and growing in confidence and being able to be more comfortable in herself rather than worrying about what people thought. She was, she said, very maternal. Her children had been one of her greatest joys. She was also very proud of her achievements in her college course and plans to enrol for a counselling course.

Structure and Focus of the Narrative

Evelyn provided a very full account. Her responses to questions were very lengthy and coherent. She described the events of her life but accompanied her tales with her

reflections and emotional reactions to them; and she showed more than once how these reactions resulted in self-directed action. She also drew on humour more frequently than her colleagues, even when she had just made a serious point. She juxtaposed information about her parents' death within a short time of each other with a notion of "wee Mary", her mother, in a mini skirt. She clearly placed a value on feelings for, and relationships with, people. Most of all, her account indicated an individual coming to terms with her life and a resolution and readiness to move on.

She had a very clear starting point which was family, her location within it and their position within the local community. She then moved to the main event of the miners' strike which she saw as key in her self-making. She related these two themes, family and political events, to her own development and her ensuing actions which culminated in her learning pathway.

She gave an account of her relationships with her parents, children and husband in her first interview, returning more than once to aspects of them; deepening the trawl for intimate information, moving from a description based on a photo to information about her daughter's illness, her mother's quirks and her delight in her son. She revealed more about her husband in the second interview, verging at one point on making me feel uneasy. She stated each member of her family was central to her sense of self and ability to cope.

Her intimates, in her view, had not been important in providing a creative space where she could self-make, for she described herself as too bound up with them. On the contrary, they provided a reflective and reassuring space for her self-making to take place elsewhere. The emotional resource they offered supported a lone playing out of an energetic and determined internal process. She "practised" (Holland et al.,

1998; p.271) her identities on a public rather than an intimate stage, returning to a base where she was not dispersed but integrated and where she could make sense and regroup.

However, conflict played a part in her self-shaping. The miners' strike brought conflict into her home when her brother-in-law and husband took different decisions about how to engage in the strike and created conflict for her in terms of principle, family loyalty, communal endeavour and relationships in, and outside, the home. Despite her own view of the strike which she silently did not support for political and very practical reasons, her actions outside the home were nonetheless protective of all those she loved. The impact of these events led to her working outside the home and becoming more decisive, strong and self-directed, leading to a job and thence to formal learning and a profession in care.

Her focus, her portrayals, her rich statements with occasional humorous asides, suggested that she had given a great deal of thought to her life. She had sought explanations and confirmations for herself. She had a sense of her own journey. The structuring of her narrative was possibly the most honed of all those I listened to as part of this research. Such mature reflection, and therefore interpretation, suggested an ability, and a desire, to maintain control.

Linguistic Aspects of the Narrative

Her language affirmed much of this analytical approach. She moved between the vocabulary of reflection and interpretation on the one hand, and words and registers of intimacy with people and of situations recalled and re-lived on the other. This

“switching” (Dossena, 2005) or linguistic “bi-polarism” is especially evident in the first interview in response to the “situational and pragmatic constraints” of our engagement (Dossena, 2005, p. 153). In the first interview in encompassing “different aspects of bits of codes at the same time” she arrived at a blended and varied linguistic output.

In the first interview, her language spontaneously evoked life and community in the warehouse where she worked “it wasnae a bad job...”. In speaking of her dad with whom she had a very close relationship, her language was warm and familiar: “he was a dead outgoing person, em and he was like... and a very affectionate person...”. She spoke of her daughter as “brilliant”; the word connoted passion and strong faith. By way of contrast in giving an account of herself, her language was altogether more measured and clearly the outcome of some logical process: “I always felt self-conscious because I was so quiet and you know, I felt that people thought ...”.

In the second interview, possibly feeling more relaxed, her language was generally more colloquial and the register less formal. There was less of a linguistic mix and she sustained this to the end of the discussion. The vernacular was particularly strong when she recalled an emotional situation when a client told her that she was dying. This episode and her natural use of a particular language was an example of the force of her emotions and her willingness to communicate and engage warmly with a dying woman.

Generally her language indicated that she was moving gradually from interpretation mode to becoming more spontaneous and more interested in connecting with me as a person. She wanted to convey to me her feelings and reactions.

Unlike Anthea, who retained overall control of language and selected modalities, tone and words as she saw fit throughout both interviews, Evelyn, while very much in control of the whole account, filtered her language increasingly less, so strong was her compulsion to be herself and to express who she had become.

Where Anthea and Catherine adopted more technical terminology, using learned terms and concepts to express professional issues, Evelyn progressively spoke in a way with which she felt comfortable. My terms of reference did not constrain her it seemed. My presence presented no barriers and she did not feel in any way compelled to take account of me in linguistic terms. Where use of language signalled internal struggle in two of the previous participants' accounts, Evelyn's language suggested calm, inner strength and self-confidence.

The content, structuring and language of her account offer helpful insights into what her major concerns are and what, in her view, has been significant in her self-making.

Identity and Self-Making

Her brother-in-law's stance against the miners' strike was a key issue in understanding how her identity was forged. Her own responses, as she worked creatively at the boundaries of interconnected differences among the conflicting interests of all parties, were central to her self-making and social transformation from mother and dependant to informed, thinking professional.

Her brother-in-law's action in being a "scab" put the family at emotional, financial and physical risk. It created a barrier between her family and the local community. In

her own family, Evelyn as a mother of very young children had to deal with relying on food parcels for survival, supporting her husband, as well as taking it on herself to defend and “protect” family members from anger at her brother-in-law’s behaviour.

In spite of her disapproval of the miners’ action she was forced into assuming a role which belied her own convictions. The effects therefore, of the strike prompted reflection and an inner process of questioning, “a dialectic with the environment” (Marková, 2003) resulting from dialogicality. In Marková’s terms, the strike generated continual internal dialogue leading to reformed social representations (Marková, 2003) or understandings of the world and society. The collision between ideologies played out in the contested terrain of her immediate surroundings also required her to act forcefully and with ostensible conviction, while silencing her ideological misgivings.

This disjunction between her personal response and the culture of her community (as well as family histories); her conflicted practice in response to changing societal parameters and circumstances (Holland and Lave, 2001) was significant in her project of self-making. Anger and indignation, anxiety and fear, as well as a sense of inadequacy in terms of generating income all accompanied insight into what was really happening in the political arena. She says she felt used both by the Union and the government for political gain. Her considered actions within this environment added impetus to her self-direction, and created an appetite for personal achievement. This blend of conflicting feelings and the disharmony between them and public action was a driver in her eventual move into formal learning and work.

Her whole account was cast as a journey towards knowledge and ideas and towards confirmation that she could in fact “do a bit more”. She valued learning as part of her

self-making, as well as a means of self-justification and understanding of life experience. She linked work, learning and her family background and circumstances. Her mother's mental illness, her aunt's manic depression, her post-natal depression and her daughter's need, all formed a notional cluster around her move firstly into the study of Psychology and Sociology, then to residential care, then to an interest in counselling.

She returned to the subject of politics, of Thatcherism and strike action towards the end of the second interview, quoting it as an example of the impact of the learning process and her study of social policy. It affirmed her own thinking about what she felt to be true through first-hand experience. It provided a retrospective explanation for her own conflict. At the same time the theoretical framework which her learning had brought, represented both the overarching rationale for the socialist views of her cultural environment and childhood and an endorsement of her political stance. For Evelyn, experience and learning went together. She related knowledge to her lived experience and to her environment, but it was clear that for her the role of learning was to answer the questions which she had already formulated as an outcome of an ongoing dialectic.

Increasingly, in listening to her speak, I was aware of the force of an internal dialogue and inner processes which had been an enduring power house for authorship and innovation. She recounted the story about leaving school in terms of a running away. However what it showed, I think, was someone who increasingly played an active role in her self-making as a result of that inner process. It was in fact a step towards a life which she had chosen over another, willed by her father and her teachers. Her marriage to, and fierce love of, a man who was "fifty three going on

twenty three” and still smoking hash was significant. She was not altogether bound by convention or what others thought. In all significant life events she has exercised a freedom.

Her account showed a strengthening inner voice as a result of life experience, a growing ability to detach and reflect whilst engaging with those around her. Clearly she had given a lot of thought to her learning and work choices and questioned her motivations and preferences. For example she said she was interested in this area of work because she was interested in people. She also offered a view of herself as quiet and reserved more than once. In addition she worked very hard at attempting to make sense of life events for herself and for others. Her strengthening voice culminated in an ability to make itself heard in dialogue with others and to offer her own thoughts and conclusions. This was particularly clear when she spoke to her troubled client, Mary drawing on new inner resources; to the woman in the class the others don’t like; to young Jean with whom she should “have a word, because she’s fallen away a bit”.

She had come a long way from the girl who provoked a confrontation with her teachers because she felt under-confident about what lay ahead, and could not articulate it in words, even to the art teacher who was sympathetic and supportive. She was in fact a forceful person emerging, as an act of will or possibly subconsciously, from the shell of “a very quiet person”.

In my view, it was the effect of particular relationships which can be regarded as turning points in her life. Her special bond with her father was significant in her self-making. In encouraging her to draw, when he recognised her ability to do so, he raised her own awareness of her potential not only in art but in learning more

generally: “that’s probably why I’m more into kind of learning things now”. His perception of, and aspirations for, her probably also led her to question, to reflect and reach her own decisions about what she wanted in her life.

The other significant person in her self-making has been her husband. What he did was to present a different cultural system and world view which she found appealing and in direct contrast to much of her own life where she was quiet and reserved. She lived in many ways through him but progressively took ownership of a more extrovert existence. Both her husband and her father were outgoing and sociable. She said “my husband had a very, very happy childhood ... like he would go out at eight in the morning with his brothers and come back in eight o’clock at night and take bottles of water and pieces and jam away”. I suggest that her evolving self-confidence and her reflective approach to her actions had been shaped by her emotional bonds with these two strong, strangely similar and influential men in her life.

Motherhood has also been a strong turning point in her life. She described it as one of the greatest joys, while stating that she was not “maternal”. Evelyn had been a prime mover in choosing to locate herself in certain situations and engaging in relationships as she saw fit. However, motherhood and the influences of unexpected relationships with children have also been a key aspect of her self-making. The bringing up of a daughter who has depression had the potential to take her back to the unhappy childhood that she has escaped from. Because of the self that she had become, through her uplifting and reinforcing relationships with her father, husband and with her son, she was able to offer her daughter a strong rescuing hand from out of her mental darkness. By our second interview her daughter was more positive

about life, signalling Evelyn's effectiveness in helping. Finally, Evelyn's relationship with her mother was dutiful at best which probably explained why she did not see herself as maternal, although the effect of that relationship with her own mother, was to allow her to express motherhood in an unlearned but deeply considered way.

Evelyn located herself socially, culturally and historically more overtly than any of the other participants. She made a connection between self-making as an outcome of her struggle in a community and family environment which had been changed by the social and political events of the times. Her self-making and her epiphany were the outcomes of painful struggle within her as she tried to reconcile conflicting thoughts and feelings in that creative frontier distancing her from all others during that historic and troubled period. She saw links between her working "creativity" (Holland and Lave, 2001, p. 9), the start of her personal journey towards learning and her new working lifestyle and recognised that they all flowed from her ability to respond to her situation.

What was interesting about her, like the other participants, is that while she made transitions in her life, other identities were still live and present. Often these conflicted. Her mixed language and codes within it, the professional and the vernacular are evidence of that. More strikingly, her dealings with Mary, the dying woman, while conducted at a professional level which represented one evolving aspect of Evelyn, were in fact all the more effective because of her other identities as mother, as neighbour, as provider in times of need, which enhanced that exchange. She herself commented " what I've learned has helped me tae sorta talk to people better ... you know like ... and go intae situations better as well you know". Her

identity was then made up of many selves. They were products of lived history, practised and adapted as appropriate within different contexts.

The Mary incident also showed her creative response to a situation and was in itself a turning point emanating from other turning points. Evelyn devoted a considerable time to the telling of this incident. It was a landmark for her, signalling the extent of change and transformation for her but also underlying stability. Within this interaction she recognised a self she knew and understood but she also noted the emergence of a different self. As a reflective, self-directed individual this has led to an altered cultural logic, and altered understandings of society, which in themselves led to further change.

Her strengthening voice which she traced for me, in both her structuring and content, was an outcome of two processes. Firstly, she had built her “I” in the spaces for authoring which life had presented to her. A noteworthy example was the decision to leave school as a departure from expectations and the will of others; another was the strike and the continual to and fro between identification with culture and loved ones and a developing standpoint and philosophy which was her own.

Secondly, this self-making was an enduring act; a project in progress initiated and progressed by Evelyn. She both reflects and acts, and in the doing evolves her own philosophy through living a history.

Berlin (1990) has defined man as “self-transforming”, as an “actor, a purposive being, moved by his own conscious aims as well as causal laws, capable of unpredictable flights of thought and imagination and of his own culture as created by his own effort to achieve self-knowledge and control of his environment” (pp.68-69).

Evelyn's account suggested that she did not have any forward plans when she took up work at the warehouse; it was simply to earn money for Christmas presents. But she went on from there, enrolling firstly for evening classes in Psychology and Sociology then the HNC in Social Care, and now she was considering "finding out about counselling". Evelyn has increasingly been self-directing and self-transforming in response to a changing, internalised cultural logic.

She may have had no rational plan in undertaking work or education, in marrying her rebel husband, in having her children. She had no expectations of living out a maternal role. But it would be inaccurate to suggest that all of these actions and decisions were not part of her bigger long-term plan which was self-fashioning and progressively moving herself on. Evelyn consistently entered into situations with an open mind, engaging as she saw fit as well as reflecting and permitting change. Again and again she "made worlds" and a self from these situations; that is to say, within the broad framework of creating identities for herself, Evelyn took on and viewed the new as an opportunity for self-making. Her family life was one example of this. Her gradual move into a formal learning situation from informal interest classes at night was another. She constantly displayed the existence of a sense-making and guiding logic and an evolving philosophy. While her narrative was in itself a process of inner dialogue, as she moved herself through the events of her life, she was impulsive and exploratory. Both her decisions to reject as "not-in-me" or to incorporate (Holland and Lave, 2001, pp. 14-15) the different lifestyles and values of others were spontaneous, sensed and therefore an enduring aspect of self.

Evelyn's identity consisted of shifting inflections which co-existed with what was durable (Holland et al., 1998, p. 8). There were fleeting aspects of her identity and

aspects which were fixed. Despite an account which suggested change, and a multiplicity of identities “spread over the material and social environment” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 8) there was a strong sense of permanence. Her self-making project and continual dialogical relationship with her context represented durable aspects of her identity together with the reflection/action process which informed both that project’s construction and its practice. There was also a continual interplay between exposed and practised identities and hidden identities; between permanence and her self expression within “figured worlds” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 41).

Freda’s Narrative

Content of the Narrative Provided in a Chronological Order

Freda is happily married with two teenage children. She is in her late thirties or early forties. She was adopted around the age of two having previously been in a children’s home. She had very strong memories of these early experiences. She lived with her adoptive parents and a brother who had also been adopted. She was critical of the way her brother had treated his mother and of his abuse of his first wife. Her adoptive father had been a coal miner and her mother worked in the family home, having been permanently disabled in a tram accident. Both parents had had health problems for as long as she could remember. She became her mother’s carer from the age of twelve when her mother developed agoraphobia and she also took over all the household chores.

From an early age her father abused her sexually and physically and, although she felt what was happening to her was not right, it was only when she started to play in friends' houses and experience a different kind of family life that she realised how different her life was from that of her friends. She couldn't remember exactly when the abuse started or stopped but she knew it stopped around the time that she had her own car and she was more able to get away from the house. She had been determined to drive because she perceived it as a way towards freedom.

Her upbringing had been a strict one. Her mother had been very assiduous about taking her to Church and her father, of whom she was afraid, was very authoritarian. She found out by accident that she was adopted. This had been a blow to her and she spoke of her hurt. She described her childhood as barren, without affection or warmth and she spoke of her constant desire for parental approval which led her to perform highly at school and to try constantly to be the "perfect child". The abuse increasingly affected her work at secondary school – she particularly mentioned a growing loss of self-confidence. At the same time, she became very devout and found solace in her faith which became a major theme in her life from then on. She described herself as being "saved" at the age of eleven. She later became very involved with the Girl Guides which she enjoyed for the freedom from her domestic situation and because of her love of the open air.

At the age of eighteen she had wanted to go to India to do missionary work and had completed all the necessary preliminaries, but her parents would not permit it. Parental pressure to find employment following this episode resulted in her becoming a shop assistant. She remained in this role for 16 years. She described herself throughout all of her teenage years as being "an emotional mess", and shortly

after she started her job she became anorexic. The medical help she received was unsatisfactory and she spoke of the lack of any help or support at that time from her parents. The revelation that she was suffering with an eating disorder resulted in more domestic violence towards her.

She lived with her parents throughout her adult life including after she married. She and her husband lived initially for four years with her parents and moved when their daughter was two years old. She spoke of her father's continuing control of them and increasingly of her daughter. She and her husband made up their minds to emigrate to Canada, but in the end she felt she just could not do that to her parents. She was close to her daughter but even closer to her son and she described her children's experience as each having a parent they could confide in and be close to.

Her father died five years ago. Her anger and desire to escape from him was such that on the evening when her father had a stroke, she was tempted to ignore it and not seek help for him so that everything would be "finished with". She did, however, seek help and dutifully accompanied him in the ambulance to hospital, having tried unsuccessfully to revive him herself.

When talking about her father she combined a feeling of protectiveness towards him with deep anger at his abuse and total domination of her, controlling even what she and her mother ate and wore so that after he died they did exactly the opposite to what he would have wanted. She said she felt no loss whatsoever when he died. She told me, for example, of re-arranging her cutlery drawer and eating fish and chips on Fridays as an act of defiance. Freda believed her mother never knew that every Thursday when she went to her church meeting, her husband was abusing their daughter. Freda had chosen, even in their subsequent closest moments, to shield her

mother from this knowledge to protect her memories of her husband and of their marriage. At the end of the second interview Freda left me poems describing her feelings after being abused, turning her face to the wall. One poem is a plea to her mother not to go out that night and recalls the sound of the door closing behind her mother.

After her father's death she and her husband became close to her mother and she recalled this as a happy time. She spoke of her husband's generosity to her mother. Her mother died three years after her husband. Around that time, Freda had successfully completed an Access course at college for entry to a degree in Social Studies at Stirling University. However, she chose not to continue with her studies in order to be more available for her mother.

Her mother's death was a turning point for her because it led to another spell of anorexia and a virtual breakdown; and it was only at that point that she began to confront her abuse by her father. She confided in her husband about the abuse and underwent therapy. The death of her mother was a catalyst. She said it left her free to recognise how much she had lived her life around her parents' needs and wishes.

She described the afternoon of her mother's death as horrendous, because she was placed in a difficult situation. On the one hand she felt it was her duty to do the right thing and respond to medical staff on the telephone telling her how to revive her mother. But on the other hand she knew that resuscitation was not what her mother would have wanted. What she felt, she said, when she looked at her mother as she lay on the floor "with her eyes open" was anger.

Her counselling had finished not long before our discussions. While still undergoing therapy for the abuse she had to write an essay on abuse as part of her HNC in Social Care. She felt pleased that she could write the essay from an objective and sensitive standpoint and felt that this was evidence of her recovery. She chose not to share any of her experiences with her class group.

As a Christian she had been associated with various voluntary work projects including a recent course organised by the church in counselling. She described her life as a journey which was unfinished. She was she said “still looking for Freda” who had been developing only from the short two years since her mother’s death.

Structure and Focus of the Narrative

Freda was, in her own words, trying to grow and discover an identity, leaving behind her a past. Hers was a history as she saw it that prevented self-making. In terms of structure, the first interview was very long and most of it focused on her life with her parents and the period immediately after their death. It was an account which placed all the events of her life including her marriage and motherhood within the context of the abuse she suffered. Both her structuring of the narrative and the content of it indicated that what was important in her self-making was the continual “struggle” (Holland and Lave, 2001, p. 3) and turmoil of the years before and after her marriage; and her conflicting emotions of both loss and relief when each of her parents died. These experiences gave rise to confused and contradictory emotions which affected her subsequent actions.

She described how the physical and unnatural experience of being abused by her father, the strong impulse to shield and to be complicit with him, together with her natural desire to be protected by both mother and father, led to anxiety, guilt, and loss of self-esteem. Equally, the experience also gave rise to feelings of love and duty. She wanted to please even to the point of submitting to her father. She felt responsible at a very young age for safeguarding her parents' marriage and their close relationship.

Her confusion was played out in her choosing to continue to live in the parental home after marriage. Her description of these events demonstrated her own need to rationalise them in the light of what she now understood. Her expression and tone suggested revelation even to herself. Anger at the sight of her mother dying and the temptation not to help her father as he was dying of a stroke are striking examples of contradictory identities. She was a loving daughter, writer and lover of poetry, a gentle person who loved the open air. At the same time she was a woman who felt wronged and wanted revenge and justice. She had been a stoic who had silently absorbed and satisfied all the needs and wishes of two people; and she was a thinking, assertive young woman wanting to speak out on her own behalf. Eventually she was free to do this and confided to her husband, to her counsellor and to me. All these emotions and reactions, or "subjectivities" (Holland et al., 1998, pp.6-7), and a self as a "collection point" (Holland and Lave, 2001, pp.18-19), with all the imprints of her history, as she lived through those years of change, were fundamental to her identity making, both at that time and in the future.

Linguistic Aspects of the Narrative

Throughout our discussions her language varied very little. She sustained a fairly formal discourse during both meetings. Her utterances were very long compared to those of the other key participants. At times they became disjointed when she referred to more personal and emotive events such as her descriptions of her abuse and the death of her mother and father. In reported speech, she managed to maintain a voice and counter-voice effect between her articulate form of language and the vernacular of those whose speech she was reporting.

I think that her use of language was a distancing tool in two ways. It represented an emotional and cultural distancing from her adoptive parents, while at the same time distancing her reactions. The events had been explored already in formal and professional terms during her counselling. The language of a religious approach to these events was also present. Her strong need to protect herself and not to make herself in any way vulnerable, led me to believe that her code, forms of expression and choice of words were rarely, if at all, personal to her.

Identity and Self-Making

I was also very aware of a person trapped in, and shaped by, a situation which was not of her making, and coping or improvising as she dealt with each event in her young life. This was formative in terms of self-making. The inner processes of her dialogicality, self-initiated debate and questioning were a constant. This was consistent with Holland and Lave's constructivist view of identity. Within the small

spaces for self-making that her existence offered, she resolutely asserted herself, “building her I” (Holland Lave, 2001, p. 10). It was that dialogicality which generated her own creative responses and coping mechanisms; not telling her mother; fully enjoying the Guides, and the open air and freedoms they offered; embracing religion; getting a car and living out of the boot of it at weekends in order to escape.

Unlike the other participants, for Freda “colonisation” (Holland and Lave, 2001, p. 14) as part of her self-making in earlier years was not an option. What is evident is the extent to which her father attempted to colonise her and her strength of will in resisting. This she did for herself. Strangely although her father was bullying and controlling, she exercised a great deal of power in maintaining the equilibrium of the household and the relationships within it.

There is incontrovertible evidence in Freda’s account of her capacity for self-objectification. Her use of language indicated this in that it remained fairly formal, her tone, phrases, points of reference were battened down to where she could feel safe in the distance they allowed her from her raw feelings. Her poems, her narrative and the discovery that she was adopted and therefore unattached, her sudden awareness of difference between her own household and those of her friends, all of these expressions and discoveries of selfdom indicated a strong ability to stand back from herself. Holland et al. (1998) ascribe self-discovery to the ability to see oneself objectively; and in doing that to build identity through self-directive actions. These actions may represent a playing into “domination” as part of “social relations of power” (Holland et al., 1998, pp.57-59). Or they may represent a desire for

liberation, or a seeking out of possibilities for freedom from social norms and discourses.

She grew through playing into and discarding, where possible, the wishes of those around her. This self-knowledge developed as an outcome or “derivative of activities” (Macmurray; 1957). It was influenced by an ongoing subjective/reflective process, formed and reformed through external influences such as her developing Christian beliefs and, possibly as a result, changing cultural values. Increasing self-knowledge was key in the making of her selfhood which stood proud and strong in the face of the opposing forces of her life with her parents.

Previous analyses have shown changing and conflicting identities as mainly practised and as an outcome of what I have referred to above as the subjective/reflective process. I think that Freda was different in this respect. She said on several occasions throughout both interviews that she was searching for herself. She spoke of self-direction and journey. Her identity in many ways remained largely un-practised (Holland and Lave, 2001, p. 3). She said tellingly that she wasn’t allowed to express who she was. Her limited social interactions were both contaminated by the strength of will of her father and her own submission to it. The “practice” of identity was more internal rather than external, an explanation perhaps for disjunction between thought and action expressed in her mental health problems.

Castells (1997, p, 7) writes that identities are sources of meaning for the actors themselves, constructed through the process of “individualisation”. In Freda’s case this is appropriate. Her life has been a solitary affair lived outside the boundaries of real engagement through a need to preserve her privacy. Her existence had been then a process of individualisation; her selfdom, or selves, constructed within. In order to

act, and to express herself and selves, she needed to explore the outcome of that process of construction through years of maintaining the mask of obedient daughter.

Freda raised interesting questions for me in relation to identity construction. I have indicated in previous analyses that the identities of participants were practised and dispersed and that this was a process of self construction. However, Freda demonstrated that this need not necessarily be so. Freda's identity was not so much practised as built. The practice and essence of her were often contradictory.

I am not suggesting that she lived a life without any action whatsoever; but given the amount of governance that she described and confronted (evidenced by her own narrated experience) it would appear that her identity or identities were not necessarily practised. Therefore it would seem that her development of selves was to a large extent an intellectual and emotional construct in the absence of practised identities.

Freda's task when freed from constraints was possibly to explore these contradictions, dispersals and aspects of self. She was exercised as to what her identity was, more so than the others. The concept arose several times in our discussions. It was very important for her "to find herself". There is then for Freda an essential link between "individualisation", having a sense of self and other, and the expression of self.

Her inability to "know" or "find" herself lay perhaps in the fact that she was not sufficiently externally connected through action and practice to inform any self-understanding. Her thoughts and inner activity could be externalised to a limited extent.

I referred earlier to Marková's (2003) theory of change as social in focus and located in the mind which is "historically and culturally constituted". In her world view, social interaction is a function of a mind in dialogue leading to "diachronic and synchronic aspects of knowledge" and resulting in change; a knowledge which is, in other words, both individual and culturally shared. Freda stated quite simply that there was a part of her that "no one would ever get into" despite the physical and mental intrusions which had been imposed on her. These she had tolerated. At the same time she was able to move herself on because of that very phenomenon of mind, and inner activity, which she had carefully sought refuge in as well as built through thought, will and emotion. It was these inner processes rather than agency in and among other people which had dictated changes and stability in the making of a self.

In our discussions, she devoted little space to self-building as a mother and spouse. The unexpected transition from a position of being almost totally inhabited in her earlier life to the freedoms of married life and children did however cause her difficulty as well as offer creative space. More specifically, her difficulty in adjusting lay in her coming to terms with a life and an identity which was lived rather an internalised process. She said she had to "consciously work on" her relationship with her daughter:

because I think when you're conditioned and brought up in a certain way, you can't help but have that come out in some of the things you do and you have to make a conscious decision to change that.

I will dwell, briefly on a key issue in terms of Freda's identity which has up until now remained unexplored. I refer to the issue of the lack of a relationship with her birth parents. She had made contact with them, but she did not know them and she said that on her wedding day she looked around and there was no one present who was related by blood to her.

History, culture and heritage according to Holland and Lave (2001) have a shaping influence on identity. My analyses show this. All participants except Freda had a historical and cultural starting point in their identity self-making which in their view was significant. They had observable evidence of chronology and of their cultural ties and geographical location. Freda had a different experience through having been adopted. Her "identity crisis" and lack of self-knowledge had arisen to some extent through cultural displacement. What seems to be lacking in Freda's history, and what was visible in other participants, was an owned context; one in which identification and personification, orchestrating and improvising were possible (Holland and Lave, 2001, p.15; Holland et al., 1998, pp.17-18) through familiarity and possibly a greater intensity of relating. What they had and what she did not, was a legacy and a setting in which both familiarity and struggle with self featured. The other participants were able to confront observable and inherited aspects of self in the family members around them, as factors for self-construction. For Freda as an adopted child, this had not been possible to the same extent.

This absence of heritage, which was a part of her self-perception, complicated and delayed her construction of self. It had also been a journey which she had undertaken in isolation. She spoke several times of her lack of confidence in many of the situations she found herself in, including learning. More than the other participants,

Freda was uncertain. Her questioning and exploring were more evident than in the other narratives. Her task was to construct her identity in her inner world of religious faith as a response to an unacceptable domestic situation to which she did not feel connected. What all participants had in common, however, including Freda, was the struggle of self-detaching, and seeking difference, in order to define the boundaries between self and context and self and others.

Finally, with regard to Freda, I will deal with turning points as a factor in self-making. What has been increasingly clear to me is that a number of aspects of a life act as turning points. Denzin (1989) defines the biographical method of research in terms of life documents which describe turning points or epiphanies in one's life (p.13; p.22). This suggests single, perhaps sudden, interventions which dramatically alter perceptions, actions and self. What I have found, especially in Freda's case, is that turning points can be a protracted event sustained over time, consequently, their impact on identity may be greater. I have also found that relationships represent significant forces for "turning". This was true in relation to all the participants including Freda who states clearly that change or "epiphany" (Denzin; 1989) comes about through an interaction with those "to whom you are attracted" causing both self and others to become more real and open".

To conclude, what Freda had learned she said was that "you are in a darkened room and the curtain's black and there's a wee, tiny, tiny, tiny hole in it and you can see the sun shining through and it doesn't matter about all that blackness round you, you'll focus on that tiny, tiny, tiny wee light".

Summing Up

In all the lives I have described here, it is clear that identity has been built through all the relationships, influences and events experienced by those who have participated in the study. This is evident in the accounts themselves and more importantly, it is what all participants believed to be true. These events were they said what made them who they were.

The evidence from these narratives shows that identity is both practised and constructed which is consistent with the views of Holland and Lave (2001) and Holland et al. (1998). In each account these individuals entered into situations, engaged with others and were different people in different contexts. There was clear evidence of self-dispersal and fragmentation. This was evident in relation to Anthea, both artist and professional. It was evident in Bob being equally comfortable in a middle class environment and in his work with disadvantaged and challenging adolescent boys. It was also evident in relation to Catherine, who was in different circumstances, a distraught mother, a victim, and a PTA activist and teacher. All these people described their lives in terms of self-construction, change, moving on, impact and response. In some cases the endpoint of the process had been determined, as in Catherine's case where she wanted a radical change of lifestyle through taking up a teaching career. In other cases it was the journey itself rather than the goal which represented a kind of transformation. Evelyn is a good example of this determined self-directed trail, constantly positioning herself where both life events and learning would confirm her ideologies and views and from where, affirmed and ever more confident, she could move forward yet again. In the case of Freda whose identity was very fragmented, the construction of herself was a much more tentative

process. While she did practise her identity in small ways, arguably, her experience was more of an exploration of an identity constructed in the mind. Hers was a figured reality rather than a practised identity.

In all these narratives, chronology, culture and history had to some extent acted as a shaping influence on the identities of the individuals, through their responsiveness to events, actions and reflection, and their impact on local and wider contexts. This was true of Anthea, the impact of her early life resulted in her choosing a caring profession in her later life. It was also true of Catherine and her turning away from her past towards a degree and a career in teaching and of Evelyn where the effect of living in a mining community led her towards a career in care. Most participants were at different times in their lives in positions of creative struggle with their family environments and culture; harmonies with, and oppositions to, their contexts. Their reflective responses, leading to action within immutable community ideologies, political affiliations, family relationships, had led to either a pulling away from, or a changed identification with, their contexts. At certain periods in their lives both harmony and struggle co-existed. Bob demonstrates this through his working and personal life. Catherine demonstrates this through her present life and her relationship with her past. Evelyn is a very good example of both a deep conviction about the moral wrongs of the Scargill-Thatcher warmongering and at the same time her full participation in the life of a mining community which it affected. Consistent with Holland and Lave's (2001) view, both positions, that of incorporation and rejection represented a defining of self, individualisation and identity and led as a result to change, an altered self or to stability and a newly confirmed or reformed self.

Holland and Lave (2001) construct their entire identity theory on the notion of “enduring struggle”. Their claim is that this practice of conflict within societal and local contexts represents a vehicle for “cultural production”; that the output from individual confrontation with other norms, values and difference results in change and transformation (Holland and Lave, 2001). There was indeed tension in many aspects of Bob’s life resulting in different and new aspects of his identity. The best example of this was his gradual adaptation to a life with Donna. He struggled to reconcile an identity formed through history and cultural background with one which he had begun to construct. As Freda slowly emerged from her mental health problems (themselves one might argue symptoms of conflict caused by the oppression of her past), part of her renaissance was the difficult process of forging and practising fragmented and partially formed identities. Struggle and confrontation ran throughout Catherine’s preoccupation with escaping from a set of circumstances, and her resolute and frantic bid for another identity which her chosen lifestyle and those around her tantalisingly evoked for her.

But this “conflicted practice” (Holland and Lave, 2001, p.5) which individuals “engage in within their historical contexts” is not always an aspect of self-making in the current study. For Anthea and to some extent Evelyn this was generally not the case. They were totally integrated and in harmony with their backgrounds; their many identities a rich tapestry, woven with the diverse and colourful threads of background, both inherited and adopted; of fully embraced current cultural norms.

While all participants clearly conveyed that they were engaged in a process of flux, in all these life experiences there is a clear sense of both permanence and transience. These individuals were “composites” of many, often “contradictory self-

understandings and identities” (Holland et al., 1998, p.8). I found, however, that Bob’s military background was an immovable aspect of his life against which his self-making projects took place, and his history represented a set of ideologies to which he returned time after time. I found that in Catherine’s case, her new identities, lifestyle and roles were precariously offset by “sediment” from the past (Holland et al., 1998, p.18) and that she was conscious of the tensions between these different selves. Her new identity was one, however, which through determination she intended to inhabit and project to her intimates and even to herself. I cannot say for certain therefore that identity is a fluid concept where nothing is certain. In Freda’s case, whether or not the lack of a cultural heritage and birthright as she saw it, was significant is questionable. What was key, though, was the enduring presence of what her past history, experience and reactions to them had made of her.

At the level of the words and actions of their lives, any coherence in identity is at times scant. At a deeper level, there is on the other hand, a constant which goes beyond the Holland et al. (1998) notion of random “durability” (p.271). I found an energy and self-direction from within, guiding the subsequent decisions and actions of the individuals themselves.

This study of these participants suggests then that a culturalist view which explains identity as being consistent and progressively developed, cannot be sustained. Nor is a constructivist view of identity as continually in motion, sufficient in itself. I found that selfhood is both enduring and unstable and that both permanence and volatility are in continual and dynamic relationship one to the other within the broader concept of identity. Identity bears both the characteristics of stability and change. Change and stability are interrelated and disruptive one of the other and the practice of identity

can be an enactment of either of them. Planned self-making activity, self-directed change and improvised identity construction are all articulations of identity and central to the making of it. They are all evident in the lives of these five individuals, for example: in their decisions to move on as witnessed in Evelyn's description of her journey from working in the warehouse to becoming a counsellor, in Bob's move from his complex relationship with military life to a new career as a carer and in Freda's seeking of freedom from a damaging home life. These planned self-directed moves as well the more random decisions they made about their lives resulted in all of their cases in altered and new identities.

What is blurred in Holland's theoretical standpoint are the distinctions between identity, self-making and self-direction. The productive dynamic between them is not sufficiently defined. Additionally, questions arise from my study about the capacity of self-making actions to dislodge durable aspects of identity; the capacity of self-making activity for new permanence; and why profound and lasting change is at times permissible, willed and anticipatable and at times not.

This research clearly shows that the central protagonist for self-making whether responding to externally imposed circumstances, whether locating him/herself differently, is the imaginative, evolving and dialogical individual impelled towards resolution, a certain coming to terms, or change. In all cases, these participants acted as agents for their own self-making. They sought change and moved themselves towards locations and people, spaces for authoring, where they themselves could rearrange aspects of themselves, focus on new and different inflections of self, adapt and practise a different self. In these spaces, albeit limited in Freda's case, they were free to draw on a store of resources with which to be creative, entrepreneurial and

flexible. This was evident in Anthea's entry into an artistic world, Bob's accommodation of a caring environment, Catherine's adoption of a professional lifestyle and Freda's increasing attraction towards a life in the open in the company of others. Significantly, both Freda and Catherine strongly rejected any "colonisation" (Holland and Lave, 2001, p.10-14) within, or by, their environments of origin; they stood clear of any social, cultural or emotional identification with their home background. This act of disassociation was the driving force for Catherine's self-moving towards different self/ves and towards an existence which was a denial of anything which had preceded it.

Riessman (1993) as previously stated, describes narratives as a sequence of messages which the teller wants to convey. It was obvious to me as spectator and quasi-confidante, that the prime movers in self-making and identity construction were these individuals. Participants' selection of significant self-making events, their structuring of accounts, choice of language, and focus, combined with an almost uncontrollable verbal energy and proud courage, showed that they saw themselves as orchestrators of selves, and wanted to communicate that perception.

They selectively told stories of the exploits and triumphs, sadnesses and failures wherein they had authored their own making. They had entered into these situations certainly with no "rational plan" (Holland et al., 1998) but had nonetheless exercised control and choice in relation to self. Bob had developed a professional caring identity through his somewhat speculative move to working in a residential institution for boys. He had evolved within this context, building new aspects of self into essentially "durable" dimensions of self (Holland et al., 1998). Anthea had forged an artistic self from within the context of a difficult relationship with Danny

where she both “practised” (Holland and Lave, 2001) a permanent self and developed an altered self. From the context of her life with Gordon, Catherine was forging a new identity as teacher and middle class Mum while retaining aspects of self such as determination and anger resulting from her past.

They had seized opportunities to take what they saw as fitting, useful and useable for their self-making. New or inflected selfhood was an outcome of the conflicted practice of history-in-person and existing norms (Holland and Lave, 2001). It emerged as self-authoring from the spaces between the two. This self-direction as a willed and uniquely individual journey and the major turning point events, relationships and life stages, are what constituted their often contradictory, stable, variable and future selves.

The concept of the self as taking action which was guided by an inner process in relation to self-making acts, and the self as self-seeking and predatory in relation to identity construction, are strikingly evident within the research. Participants were reactive in the conduct of their lives and through those reactions they authored selves (Holland et al., pp.170-190). They were guided in this by what Holland et al. refer to as “internalised cultural logic” (1998, pp.271-2).

There was clear evidence in their accounts of their lives and their reflections on their past and present contexts of the part that dialogicality and dialogical processes had played in the forging of their identities. They gave accounts of continuous inner activity and external dialogue as part of processes of transaction and action. They talked of self in response to other and self in response to context. Catherine and Freda talked of how they visualised who they might be. Bob and Evelyn demonstrated a constant appetite for moving on. Anthea said that she would never

know herself because she would never reach an end to the journey. Their sharing of their reflections with me was a further dialogical process through which they articulated their dialogicality. Consistent with Marková (2003) I found that for the key participants the bonding of *Ego* with *Alter* represented a new and dynamic force for change. Catherine's marriage and the circle of friends it opened to her changed her perceptions of her history and her aspirations for her future, leading to her taking the action required to become a teacher. In a similar way, Anthea's relationship with Danny and his artistic friends resulted in her exploration and subsequent creation of visual art.

Holland et al. (1998, pp.271-2) refer to "internalised cultural logic" as a key factor in the making of self and selves; they emphasise the "generativity" (Holland and Lave, 2001, p. 9) or creative force of this dialectic leading to identity production; and alteration as "an orchestration of the practice of others" (Holland and Lave, 2001, pp.14-15) and as a suturing (1998, p. 271) process, within social contexts (1998, p. 270). Marková (2003) points out the importance of mind in an active dialogical relationship with its surrounding environment and its continual accumulation of social knowledge through social representations of that environment. It is significant that both Marková in constructing a theory of knowledge and Holland in presenting a framework for self-making and identity recognise the pivotal role of these inner processes in terms of change. I found this to be the case in my own small-scale study. I also found that dialogicality as essential to the construction and practice of the identities of the five key participants in the research, was itself a recurring aspect of identity. The most significant factor for self-making and identity construction was the predominant forcefulness of the active mind of these participants; of thought

processes associated with action, movement and self-positioning; of interrogation of self in a context which led to new levels of identity and self-making. I consider that this enduring dialogicality was identity-making and was in itself a permanent feature of identity.

Another outcome from my research was the importance of communication as part of self-making. Holland et al (1998, p.8) represent identity as spread across not only a material environment, but across dimensions in which the intellectual, the spiritual and the deeply personal are central. The most striking aspect of practised identity in all narratives was exchange which was conducted at a number of levels. Dialogue between people, in classrooms, with tutors, with me demonstrated an exchange as well as adapted speech, language and terms of reference. Participants played around the boundaries of professional language, vernacular and intimate language. They used, discarded, mixed and experimented with codes, “genres”, and terminology. As an activity this was significant in terms of both an articulation of self and effecting change; speech and voice represented tentative entries into new worlds and dialogue and the dialectic process were tightly bound up with practised and altered identity.

For all the key participants there were even more fundamental exchanges which had been instrumental in self-making. The growing communication between Bob and his father and his fiancée were all transactions with significant people which represented and led to identity shifts. The communication between Catherine and her circle of friends was more than spoken. Expectations were communicated, actions and behaviour were willingly learned and acceptance and welcome affirmed her and fuelled her self-making journey. Freda’s physical compliance and mental recoil from her father; his constant endeavour to control those around him; and the dilemmas

which were present within the complex weave of her family relationships with their traditional roles and breached boundaries; all of these were clearly communicated through strategies other than speech and they triggered a monumental internal process of self-making.

The impact of this continually sensed, fundamental dialogicality and communicative process was a strong force for identity making and change. It was a key dynamic in Freda's private and inaccessible world; this dialectic engagement was what sustained, nourished her and guided her self-authoring in the absence of any reference point. It was Catherine's mind which determined the boundaries and the scope of her self-making in almost all her contexts; it even influenced her leisure reading and the learning discussions she chose to engage in.

What I heard in the discourses of the participants was struggle and harmony, self-transformation and change. I heard symbols of "incorporation" (Holland and Lave, 2001, p.14). I also heard hesitancy and debate in their silences, an inner dialectic, and growing self-confidence in strengthening voices of inflected and new identities. I heard ongoing self-making in their developing technical and professional language as learners and professionals. I heard reflection, review and interpretation. In their most eloquent articulations, a language from within, I heard the intimacy of what was deeply personal and raw.

It could be argued from the research then, that the identities of these people, as presented; as enacted; as highlighted; as neglected and as nurtured; and principally as perceived by themselves, are a constituent of the mind. There is a strong case for suggesting that what is changed, changing and changeable are fleeting fragments of an individual in the making and of a fluctuating, recurrent and changing

dialogicality; articulated in language as well as actions. Therefore I would argue that through the dialogicality which was present in these five key participants, identity was an evolving self-perception of changed and stable self; was communicated to others through words and action and was open to interpretation and influence by them.

I have stated that identity and self-making are distinct but I would also argue that through enduring and stable dialogicality (itself an aspect of identity) and through variable self-making activities they are in a constant dynamic relationship with each other. I have also argued that the dominating force for bringing about identity shift and change and building the “I” (Holland and Lave, 2001; p. 10) is the dialogical individual for whom self-making is a prime concern. I have shown that communication has a key role in both constructing and articulating identity. I will now focus my attention on these participants in relation to learning in a further education setting.

In the next chapter I will explore the relationship between identity, self-making and learning. I will locate each learner within his/her individual learning context and explore their self-making and identity construction within that particular context. I will go on to describe how each key participant, their teachers and the wider group of participants describe learning; what it is and its purpose.

I will go on to explore self-making and change from these accounts of learning and the dialogical relationships between participants in their learning contexts. I will identify opportunities for self-making, enactments of selves and identity shift. I will focus on the articulation of dialogicality through communication and exchange and how communication and exchange themselves provide opportunities for change. I

will also consider how dialogue provides evidence of change processes. Finally, I will consider whether the dialogicality that the key participants demonstrated in the construction of their identities was also evident in them in their learning contexts.

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEARNING AND IDENTITY

CHAPTER 5 LEARNING AND IDENTITY

Our understanding of student motivation is limited because learners themselves have rarely been encouraged to reflect, in a flexible and longitudinal way, on their reasons for educational participation and learning in the context of past as well as present lives. (West, 1996, p.1).

In the previous chapter, I considered the events and relationships in the histories of five people which in their view were significant in their self-making and the forming of their identities. My analysis of these histories and of these changing contexts at different periods of their lives enabled me to identify some common themes about the construction of self and identity. In this chapter I will consider the particular cluster of relationships, events and contexts associated with learning for each participant.

Before addressing these specifics, I will describe the learning context of each learner/participant at the time of my research and the expectations of change that learners and teachers brought to learning. To do this, I will draw on discussions with learners and their teachers and my own observations of classroom activity.

As I explained more fully in the chapter on methodology, these participants volunteered to be part of my research. They were students drawn from two further education colleges. Bob, Anthea, Evelyn and Freda were undertaking an HNC in Social Care and Catherine was undertaking an Access to Teaching programme. Both

courses were designed to meet the needs of adult learners including adults returning to study. The courses and the qualifications that would be achieved through them were closely associated with change. Those undertaking the courses both wanted and expected change in their lives. For Evelyn, who had steadily made her way from miner's wife and warehouse assistant to care worker, and was envisaging a career as a counsellor, the Social Care course and qualification represented a rite of passage. It was her formal passing from one set of norms, values, language and indeed literacies (Hamilton et al., 1994) to another; and a pivot from which further professional opportunities were now open to her. However, although she now lived part of her life in a new world which was separate and entirely hers, she still inhabited her previous world of family and her community and its ways. She therefore had to contend with and reconcile her own change of status within what was a familiar, "historic" (Holland and Lave, 2001) and identity making context. The same was true for Bob, Anthea, Freda and Catherine. Like Evelyn, their learning experiences were "disruptive" (course teacher) because of the personal change which learning had brought about and which consequently affected and influenced their thinking, interpersonal relationships and transactions in their wider contexts.

The teachers were very sensitive to the wider context of their learners. Theirs was a broad view of learning which they located in the wider context of the lives of their students. They viewed learning as strands of change threaded through the rich, more expansive weave of learners' personal and social experience. In their terms, learning was closely bound up with learners' fundamental and evolving feelings about themselves, and changing enactments of themselves. These teachers saw learning as having the potential to destabilise, create tension and to prompt deeply personal and

cultural shifts and their role was to assist learners to recognise and manage these change processes. One teacher mentioned the importance of “timing” in life in relation to a return to study: “you reach a certain point when you are ready for change”. Another teacher described learning as a transition process; an experience where values are challenged and changes in thinking, knowledge and attitudes occur and are internalised and integrated within the learner. Learning she said, was about fundamental shifts which ultimately create an “evolved, progressed and developed you” and which can contribute to the learning and development/change of others. Another teacher reiterated this view of learning and its potential for personal change. Learning was not he said, just about gaining qualifications but was more about becoming a “better” worker, a more caring worker with better values. Learning was about “moving on to wherever moving on is”; it was about a change in behaviour, attitudes and thinking which may or may not be lasting.

These teachers, catalysts, who were building the now and laying foundations for the future, recognised that the process and experience of learning represented an opportunity for students to question their values and culture and that they were key participants in the self-making and identity construction of their learners. Learning was a chance for learners to grow confident about their ability, as well as to articulate uncertainties and shifting stances; and to live and apply these holistic and far-reaching results of person-building brought about by a learning experience, to their workplaces, homes and communities.

All of the teachers of the key participants located formal learning within the wider context of the learners’ broad personal development. Each had a detailed knowledge of the past and present life and sets of circumstances of their individual learners.

They were acutely aware of their learners' struggles when confronted with different ontologies, cultures and value systems and of resulting change as a response. They were focused both on the specific learning and the wider and global context of each individual, and of the ongoing interaction between the two. They carefully watched over each new stage in the lives of their learners as they travelled through the learning experience, as they managed and accommodated the changing and the new within themselves, and enacted these adaptations and evolutions on the broader front of their social, professional and personal lives.

The lecturer in the Access to Teaching course pointed out how the identification, challenging and development of students' values and views was as important as the development of the knowledge and skills they would require to complete the course successfully and embark on a degree in teaching. For example, in preparing these adults for a different life, for new contexts, and to help them develop their views on the role of women in society and homosexuality, she used a range of strategies to stimulate individual reflection and cause shift. I observed her using mainly small group discussion along with whole class discussion led sometimes by learners themselves through their presentations.

She spoke a great deal about interviews as part of the selection process for entry to the B.Ed. degree course, and the high numbers of her students who were successful in their interviews were a source of pride to her. She had analysed the interview process carefully, seeing it as a key opportunity for students to present themselves as future teachers to education professionals. Her role was to help ensure the credibility of her students when being judged by other professionals. She spoke, for example, about what interviewers considered to be acceptable; about the issues surrounding

the use of vernacular and grammar, and about issues of culture and class. She was critical of these criteria which could deter those with a strong desire to educate, but felt it was nonetheless necessary for her students to understand what was expected of them. She therefore assisted them to build on strengths, hiding what was perceived to be unacceptable.

Teachers in both courses conceived their role as broader than training or the giving of knowledge. They considered that they had responsibilities to interpret the canons of practice or implicit values and norms of these professions; to act as the pivotal point where the “impromptu actions that occurred in (learners) past, (are) brought to the present” and lead to “reformed subjectivities” (Holland et al., 1998, pp. 17-18). As representatives of the professional worlds their learners aspired to or were already a part of, they saw part of their task as ensuring that learners possessed craft literacies (Hamilton et al., 1994) which would enable them to transact and operate and thereby achieve congruence within their chosen professional contexts. Teachers’ actions and perceptions were therefore highly significant in their learners’ self-making. They included taking stock of each individual learner and their practised and presented identities and assisting them to repackage and in some cases radically remake and transform themselves. These learning settings were therefore viewed, through the pedagogical stances of the teachers, as powerful contexts for self-making and identity construction.

I will now consider the specific learning experiences in FE of each of the five key participants. I will first give an account of what each learner understood by learning. I will then describe each of them in the learning situation with reference to previous

findings on identity and self-making and identify some important factors for change within the learning experience of each participant.

Anthea: Describing learning

Anthea came to learning after the sudden death of her partner Danny and her subsequent nervous breakdown. While acknowledging the importance of formal learning and qualifications, Anthea spoke about learning in very broad terms. She was clearly proud of her academic achievements in college and valued them highly. She was aware of the status given to qualifications; they affirmed her and gave the wherewithal to act as a professional and expect to be treated as an equal by fellow professionals.

Her focus, however, was on the process of learning which was an ever active force in the wider context of her life. It made sense of the past and provided perspectives on the present. She saw learning as being essentially about people and engaging with them:

My learning, going to college and things like that, has really reconfirmed what I'd already done. I don't think I had an understanding at the time what it was I was daen ... I don't think I had ... no, I didn't have an understanding then like I have noo, whether it be caring for my family and that but it's just confirmed tae me that that's what I have done in the past and that's the way it was then and it was right then and it's still right noo. So it's a case o' if there's a way o' improving it, obviously it's going tae make my life easier and everybody that's involved wi' me and roon about me. Eh ... and as I say, your education is a way o' ... well you're oot and you're meetin' people.

Formal knowledge helped her to understand different people and their different needs in all the contexts in which she "practised" (Holland and Lave, 2001) her various

selves. The process itself of learning along with others was complementary to this. Learning opened up social opportunities according to Anthea and she clearly saw learning in terms of facilitating existing and new relationships as well as enriching the dialogue and communication which were integral to them. For many people she said, the main aim is to go out on a Friday night and meet someone but for her it was her "days at college ... it's just being in amongst people and just having the skills tae, you know, be in and be comfortable and make people feel comfortable".

For her, formal knowledge was a useable product, a continuous process and a storehouse of resources which she could draw on to nourish all aspects of her life. Her learning experience in class had caused her to reflect on the nature of abuse, to "walk a mile in their shoes" and had made her see things from her clients' perspectives. Learning was both strange and familiar at the same time. It was not about venturing into the unknown, it was more an elucidation and a broadening of perspective; both the formal aspects and the process provided a richer perspective with which to view different contexts and points of view, including her own.

Anthea attached the same profound importance and transformational potential to learning as to other significant life events such as her breakdown and her close relationships:

I just don't know if there will ever gonna be a time when I'm gonna ever really find the real me because I'm always going about open tae other things and as long as I leave myself open tae experience other things, how can I be the real me because I'm always gonna be learning and taking on mair knowledge and ..so that's why I never really can see the real me because I'll never live tae see it because I'll never know...

In making these clear connections between learning, self-making and the real and unfinished "me" she asserted her faith in the potential of learning as a self-making

process or event. She revealed an awareness of her increasing ability through learning to reach new perceptions of herself which were continually subject to change. For Anthea, learning was a constantly available resource creating change in Anthea herself, and thereby causing a shift in her interactions in both her learning context and her wider context. Both of these contexts were mutually enhancing through the agency of Anthea's changing self. Learning in a wider context was a self-making adventure for her. Its function was to help her towards self-understanding; to know more about her identity and to act as a life tool for forging and exploring new identities as well as renewing her connection with past selves.

Self-making, learning and change

Throughout her life, Anthea had been open to change and to self-making. She viewed learning as an important process for the construction of her identity and because of this she was a powerful figure and often forceful in her learning context. She was motivated to achieve the career and developmental opportunities that her learning offered and she had put herself under financial pressure to do the course. This meant that at times she was vociferous in expressing her needs when she felt other learners were disrespectful of them, when for example they talked over the lecturer so that she could not hear what was being said. She commanded an authoritative position where younger members of the class were concerned and recognised that she contributed to their self-making. They were drawn to her she said and she felt that as the "cool auntie" she "put their lives in perspective, somehow". She had then carefully assessed her position within her context. She knew where the opportunities

for self-making, practising selves and exploring the new lay. She also knew well where there were opportunities for her to be active in others' self-making.

She recognised the role and power of persuasion in constructing a self within her learning. The points of view, values and priorities of those around her had an impact on her. She evaluated the relevance of the views of others and decided what to accept and what to reject. She was also aware of her ability to exercise choice and control in developing new aspects of self and in retaining what in her view was valuable through a sifting process of what was and was not acceptable:

I've never experienced the kind of things that they've experienced but you know, you know through your ain experiences that that's how you became what you've become. I recognise that in the people, my friends and that, you know. There's Kathleen, I can recognise the clique and our opinions are really quite similar, although she's totally different fae me. But you get, I think ... aye ... knowing other people's interests and if you've the same, similar interests then it moves on tae you'll discuss personal things in your life that you wouldnae discuss wi', you know wi' so and so ...

She had then established a hierarchy of "marked" (Holland and Lave, 2001, pp. 13-14) individuals within her class group; and she had identified a support base of one or two individuals with whom she could discuss "more personal things" which she felt were more private and to whom she was "drawn". This "home" group acted as a reference point and offered the emotional support she needed. She perceived her intimate group as a safe space for growth and for exploring her identity. It was also a site for bringing forward hidden aspects of identity, such as her love of dancing and rock festivals. From this strategic vantage point she was able to migrate confidently, connect with other marked people, engage with the wider class group and return. She

said, “sometimes I feel some o’ the pupils are very “me”, and “you learn more from some than from others”, suggesting a clear separation in her mind between different groups and individuals.

She chose carefully where she “practised” (Holland and Lave, 2001, p.271) different identities and what identities she revealed. She was at times strident and assertive in her learning context but closer to home, and with her primary group, she was vulnerable, empathetic, collaborative and a listener, sharing more private aspects of self.

For her, the notions of change and learning were interchangeable and she spoke of the impact of learning on her professional identity. But she made distinctions between fundamental identity change and enactment. There were recurring aspects of her, built up through her history, which learning challenged and was beginning to shift as “durable intimate formations” (Holland and Lave, 2001, p.18). There were other aspects which were more of a re-presentation of herself. For example, her learning experience had led her to consider her “racism” and had unsettled her. It had led her to consider the presentation of a new identity in her professional life, that of a racially unprejudiced person. However, another deeper process which learning had set in motion, was the ongoing struggle between her culture, history and feelings leading to racism and an increasing “not-in- me” (Holland and Lave, 2001, pp.14-15) stance towards this embedded identity through learning: “in a work sense, if I’m daein it as a job, I’m a professional. I go in and dae my job. I don’t tend to discriminate against them”. At the same time at another level, she was “trying to get over” these deeply lodged attitudes.

This learning and these changes in her identity and the practice of new aspects of self had taken place as a result of relationships, and through a communication which was felt, unvoiced and voiced. Bernie a close friend and learning companion commented on Anthea's racism. Tutors with whom she had a "brilliant" relationship allowed her to be honest about her views but challenged them. The effect of this disapproval from those she valued made her feel that she did not want to be racist and that she wanted a different self. Being "drawn" to those such as Bernie and to some extent her tutor led her to loosen her grip on what made her different and discordant in favour of an "equalising" (Marková, 2003) with what these other "marked" (Holland and Lave, 2001) people offered. Merging her "self with other" as part of a dialogical process of exchange and an assimilation of their views and desirable aspects of otherness, had launched a process of shift. Fundamental to this dynamic of merged self with other (Marková, 2003) was both the dialogue, and emotions of mutuality as well as asymmetry (Marková, 2003); of being drawn to certain others such as Bernie and her tutors and a desire to "incorporate" (Holland and Lave, 2001, pp.13-14) what differentiated them.

Action and reflection, I have argued earlier, were central to Anthea's self-making life journey. They were equally at work in her approach to, and within, the learning context. In other life events, Anthea improvised, responded, rejected, internalised and moved herself, based on her inherent dialogical relationship with the environment. This dialogicality, and a continual dialogical process of exchange with her context, were "durable" (Holland et al., 1998) features, recurring activities, and central to the construction of her identity. They were equally present in her learning environment.

What I have shown in this account is that, as in other self-making life events, Anthea was an active participant; aware of her own self-making and alert to possibilities in the learning context, to further that cause of building her "I" (Holland and Lave, 2001, p.10). Within that context, she was constantly strategic, following an ever-present directive voice which guided her towards different settings and situations where she could construct a self and also practise her fragmented identities. She was reactive and sensitive to the norms, roles and contexts of the learning environment. She negotiated her position within these learning contexts, and through continual dialogical engagement with them, through actions, speech and response she was able to integrate and develop a self through personification and social identification.

Learning had an expected and willed shaping effect on Anthea's identity. Learning was a process which increasingly combined her classroom experience and her public and social world, a resource from which and within which new aspects of self were forged. She was able to introduce and practise these identities seamlessly within a wider sphere of being. Central to this change process and the practice of selves were relationships, feelings and communication. More fundamentally her constant dialogical stance towards her learning and wider world, and a dialogical process of engagement leading to action, were major factors for self-making and change. It was through her dialogical stance within her learning environment that the tensions and dynamic between both self-making and identity construction, permanence and transience were played out.

Anthea was at a point in her life where her college experience and the qualification she would achieve were key factors in helping her to forge new identities. This self-

making series of episodes of learning were integral to Anthea's wider life; and a trigger for identities constructed and practised on a number of broad fronts. In Anthea's case learning was made powerful only when exported to a much wider and diverse constituency. For without the reality of that day-to-day world, in Anthea's terms, learning as an isolated activity, was in itself insufficient in contributing to her cherished self-making adventure. This "exporting" of learning and the living out of it on a wider stage, professional, social and personal were the result of the combination of her dialogicality and her engagement in dialogical processes, her self-making and identity construction in her learning context and the shifts in her dialogicality or "thickening" (Holland and Lave, 2001) of some aspects of her identity.

Bob: Describing learning

As I explained earlier, Bob had returned to live at home after working abroad and was trying to decide on a future career. Gaining a qualification represented a tentative commitment to his re-established life at home and his more settled relationship with his partner, and to a career in Care. However, at the same time he was considering a return to life in the forces. Bob therefore saw formal learning as critical in resolving what direction his life should take and what he should finally commit to. The very recent death of his mother had added intensity to that decision-making process.

Bob acknowledged the importance of the HNC qualification leading potentially to an Open University degree, to "making a name" for himself, and to moving beyond "the glass roof" and undertaking more challenge in his career. Formal learning was,

therefore, a lever to move on professionally. He also spoke about learning in terms of arrangements and structures. In speaking about his previous and current college experiences he referred to student funding, curriculum, examinations and assessments.

However his real interest was in “actually learning” which he clearly saw as an experience and a process. He spoke about the importance of contributions from lecturers and members of the class. He spoke about commonality and shared goals within the class. He emphasised the active process of “interaction” between all involved, rather than being “talked at for two hours at a time” and how it helped him to engage better with learning rather than sitting down and studying for hours on end, trying to “get everything to sink in”. His experience of learning was one of sharing and finding out about what he had in common with other learners. He cited Gail as an example of this and how she had had a similar management experience on construction sites as he had had while in the army. Learning in his view prevented “stagnation” and, in common with other learners, he said, learning was about personal development and growth. When asked initially about his learning experience it was clear that Bob attached great importance to it. He talked about questioning “everything at the moment”, thereby attaching to learning in FE the same significance as to other self-making events in his life.

A durable aspect of Bob’s identity as I indicated earlier was his reflective approach and this was clearly central to his learning. Because of his strong preoccupation with self-making and identity and his capacity for inner dialogue, the learning he engaged in in the classroom brought into focus all the areas of his past and current life:

Question: Is the learning bit ... does it go beyond the classroom for you, does it cause you to think about ...

Bob: Yeah definitely...specially with this course, eh ... if you start to read about say ... and Freud and whatever, there is a little part that says 'I could maybe try and get this into my work as well. Then you have the little amateur psychologist and ... away reading up all these ... So yeah, certain things sorta trigger ... so yeah, we're talking about different syndromes or things. I think little Johnny might have something!

He made a link between classroom learning and people's varied backgrounds, and how they brought these and their experience to their learning:

everyone's had different backgrounds as well, so we can ... and different jobs, so we can all bring them in and ... well today I was asked about the army actually and there was a lot of similarities between my experience in the army and Gail ... I don't know if you've seen her.

Learning was a live and dynamic resource for Bob through which he could live a richer professional and personal life. It offered a constant flow of cultural resources and information with which, through reflection, he was able to interpret and understand events and relationships, as well as his actions and those of others.

Bob then understood learning to be an output, and a set of arrangements but more importantly, a process which actively altered and impacted on self and self-in-context. His view was that learners brought all the events, relationships and contexts which had been significant in forging their identity to this process.

Self-making, learning and change

He had been very much the author of events and contexts in his life. This self-direction had allowed him to explore conflicting identities, to reflect on these in a

broader context of self-understanding and to build a self. His upbringing was an example of an identity forged through his response to an environment.

Learning for Bob was also a willed occurrence: "I think just now is the right time for me to go back to learning". It was a chosen space and within it he was open to change and identity construction. He recognised and welcomed the dynamic which was present in his Social Care class which was altogether different to his previous learning experience:

Bob: Well I think you get more debate here, in the college, than you would ... well that's what I did when I was doing ... when I was doing, say my HND. It was a lot more authoritarian in the way that ... it was just because it was a sports course, maybe that was ... there were certain criteria that had to be every ... every...

Question: But there's a difference in this course?

Bob: Yeah

Question: More debate?

Bob: Yeah there is a lot more. Maybe that's just because of the different course ... well it suits me anyway. I prefer it.

In seeking personal development from his learning he acknowledged a self "unfinished and in process" (Holland and Lave, 2001) and he also recognised the generative and transformative potential of the process for him. He stated clearly that a change in his attitudes and values would take place before the end of his course.

Bob practised fragmented identities within the classroom. He was both reticent and strong, a listener and a leader, sensitive and autocratic in different contexts. He was different in small groups, with certain individuals and again with the wider class group and in these, he improvised, interpreted the actions of others in the group, made decisions about social positioning and made space for authoring change for himself (Holland et al., 1998, pp.271-2):

I don't know if it's so much just totally feeling comfortable but I think you can get a better idea of who's in the class and if you made a statement and you know the kind of people that are going to pick up on it.

He was selective about his contributions in these various groups. In whole class discussions: "I'd say, I do hold back from time to time ... And then if there's an important point I want to add in, I'm quite confident to add it in". He said he was often "diplomatic" in what he said in the classroom for fear of fellow students making assumptions or getting the wrong impression. On the other hand at times he argued a point "forcefully". He told me that in smaller groups and with individuals he took part in very satisfying exchanges which engaged him.

The learning process was a place where interaction on a regular basis was a prominent and valued feature of his experience. He was able in an increasingly comfortable setting to undertake self-making and to practise his conflicting and dispersed identities. He referred to a growing sense of ease within a class which was past the "storming stage". In his not "jumping in" and sitting back and watching he had clearly assessed a number of factors and reached some conclusions. One such conclusion was that this learning was fundamentally generated by a collective and communicated between individuals: "We'd had that much discussion, that much sort of output not just from the lecturer but from the other people in the class..."

Another conclusion was that he had located his opportunities for self-making, enacting and exploring identities, based on mutuality:

and her experiences working on building sites and the difference in the same kind of sort of management types and a lot of sort of similar experiences of

what goes on. Well she was like a lone worker in a sort of male dominated, so there was a lot of similarities you know ... it was a good discussion.

A further conclusion was an early and gradual “marking” (Holland and Lave, 2001) of who in the group he had most in common with and where he felt most at ease. For the moment this was with Gail. What he referred to as “personality” represented a space where self-making could take place. On the one hand, his view was that fundamental change could only take place through close friends and family. But on the other, Gail had clearly affected him and his learning experience had led him to reflect on parenting, his early life and his gradual change of politics. It had caused him to compare the dynamics of relationships with friends in the pub and those in the classroom.

He therefore created a distinction between certain marked individuals and everyone else. These were people with whom he felt a certain empathy based primarily on what they had in common. According to him, they had the potential to cause shift and were therefore central to his self-making and identity not only in his immediate classroom context but also in his wider life outside it. He talked of how the influence of their thinking on him impacted on his contribution to discussions in his pub about terrorism and discussions over management issues in the workplace.

Learning relationships were central to Bob, as was communication between him and certain others: “You are the only male? ... That’s it, so ... they’ve all been absolutely fantastic since I’ve been there. And even when I was off there, I had a card from the class and ... they’re a great bunch ... superb”. He distinguished between the close range dialogue of these relationships and more general exchanges. It was clear that

certain communicative acts were more real than others and that he was altogether more present when talking to Gail than responding to general class discussion.

One key “durable” (Holland et al., 1998) aspect of his identity was his dialogicality and his awareness of other; an ongoing dialogical process, his increasing connections with other, his reflection and externalisation of thought through speech, and action, within the learning process. At times self and other seemed to be disconnected, he spoke in terms of “I” in relation to other groups and individuals and at other times as with Gail, “I” and other seemed strongly bonded to form a single dynamic unit for change. It was from his conversations with Gail that he assumed a forceful role when addressing the whole class. Both those discussions and the impact of taking the lead had left him feeling strong and different to how he had felt before. This bonding experience of self with other, a “decentred dialogic” (Holland and Lave, 2001, p.13), was a key determinant for both identity construction and for real transformation which was clearly underway. He referred to his growing compassion as an outcome of both living with Donna and learning surrounded by a mainly female group.

I have described what Bob understood learning to be. I have shown the importance of learning in Bob’s terms and I have demonstrated a clear strategic approach to the learning context in terms of what it can provide Bob with and where he perceived he could safely practise his identities. Consistent with my previous summing up of Bob, I am suggesting that in his learning context, he was preoccupied with self and self-making as part of a dialogicality; and the qualification, the learning process and the product applied and practised were crucial aspects of the construction of self. Over this self-making, he exercised both choice and control and he was, through a dialogical process, consistently the author of self-making events and change. He gave

examples of changed aspects of self, his learned compassion, a revised view of his childhood and of the parents of his charges in the residential home as having all emerged from formal learning in an FE context. All these changes were unanticipated but accepted by him.

Catherine: Describing learning

Catherine's context for learning was a rejection of the identity forged through her history and the events and relationships of her early years in favour of a desired lifestyle and identity which was educated, qualified and professional. Asked about what she wanted from her learning she said an education. In addition to the social standing which learning and qualifications offered, for her learning was a means of feeling confident and intellectually equipped to meet and interact with people of a similar educational background.

Catherine described learning as a qualification, a process and a means of reaching a deeper understanding of the world and society she inhabited. While recognising the importance of a degree in societal terms and personal achievement, she also valued learning as a process. She commented on the mechanics of learning, changed methods of teaching and her surprise at her ability to write. She consequently saw herself in a much more positive light as a result of her learning.

She also distinguished between formal learning and learning through experience and awareness of the wider world. She saw these processes as separate but of equal importance. She recognised how her experience contributed to her formal learning. She appreciated gaining new knowledge and reaching new levels of understanding

through formal learning. She said that this learning encouraged her to use her brain and that she had transferred and applied new learning in her wider social and personal life. She gave the example of how she had applied her interest in, and learning from, Sociology to those around her: "I've learnt a lot about people that I took for granted and I realise that I'm learning more about them and understanding them better because of going into greater depth".

She did not believe that the qualification in itself created "bigger or better people" although she did recognise that it created opportunities for personal achievement, more resources in her life and job satisfaction. It was in the process of learning and its ability to impact on perceptions and understandings of self that she placed her faith. She had confidence in the ability of learning to ensure that in her world outside the classroom, she could be and act in another way; and perceive her life's course differently. The "personal challenge" which learning represented was ultimately a test of her own ability to forge an identity which she believed was her true reality, in a context which was rich in resources to support the transformation.

Self-making, learning and change

Within the learning context, Catherine was single-minded in the pursuit of her self-making objective and this resulted in her impatiently rejecting or ignoring what she regarded as irrelevant to the tasks in hand and attempting, as best she could, to approach her learning situation unencumbered by her personal life. In the classroom with her tutors and fellow learners she was somewhat reserved and very controlled

about what aspects of her identity she was willing and could legitimately share as part of a professional discussion. However, she was not able to sustain this approach as far as all aspects of her identity were concerned. For instance, her identity as mother often intruded because of the demands of her childcare responsibilities and she was forced to share this aspect of her identity with her tutor. She did say though that her tutor while being aware of these aspects of her personal life knew nothing about her background, her parents, or indeed her as a "person". She was "very focused "on her work and was able, she said, to "detach" and keep everything separate.

She adopted the same filter mechanism to her formal learning and made decisions about what was and what was not relevant to her self-making project: "I don't have to listen to all that..". She declined to enter into discussions with fellow learners which were purely personal or to respond where fellow learners used personal experiences to illustrate points, for example, in Psychology. She became frustrated when people brought up personal topics or opened up "conversations that include the whole class", and talked of not wanting to "be listening to other people's stories".

In her life experience, as I indicated previously, she was a willing participant where life events, relationships and experiences corresponded to her will and what she wanted for herself. The approach also applied to her learning situation. She was almost always in control, and forceful and resolute about dealing with what she regarded as obstacles to her aim of remaking a self. Her strong impulses for self-making made her strategic in identifying those who offered opportunities for her to fulfil that mission. One of her tutors was very significant to her in her learning experience and she spent a considerable amount of time discussing her with me.

Catherine was critical of tutors who had an open collaborative style of teaching, allowing uncensored input from learners and approved of the “structure” in this tutor’s class. She had also identified “marked” fellow students in the class whose focus accorded with her own and who would not be sidetracked by any sharing outwith formal learning.

Relationships were nonetheless very important to Catherine. She had gathered around her a support group of three fellow students who had become “very good friends”. She called them allies. They had what she referred to as “mutual trust” and offered “confidentiality”. They provided support of the kind that she would not avail herself of in the “structured” environment. She made a strong distinction between her relationships in this group and her relationship with the teachers. They offered opportunities for her to talk; they offered bonding and a chance to explore and ask questions. It was a relationship that had grown outside the classroom and offered a sense of “foyer” (my term) in the formal context. She was very clear though about avoiding letting these relationships become too personal. Nonetheless, individuals within this select group were reliant on one another and members provided each other with the emotional support both to learn and a safe space to practise aspects of self. “Being here” within the group was an important factor for Catherine. She worked mainly from within that group and said they felt uncomfortable if they were not together. She cited an example of privately studying one day in an unfamiliar college environment and feeling surprisingly insecure.

Catherine created familiar comfortable spaces in her learning context where she could learn more easily and in her own terms pursue her objective of identity and lifestyle change. She had been selective in her choice: “you would steer yourself into

a different group ... if you felt you couldn't cope ...” These relationships gathered impetus outside the classroom, and possibly offered Catherine self-making opportunities which were subsequently imported into the formal context. At the very least they offered possibilities for Catherine to enact and experiment with new professional and learner identities; they provided a secure place for her to reveal current other identities of wife and mother; and might even enable her to uncover identities rejected and painful to recall.

Catherine also distinguished between small and wider class groups. Her self-making possibilities were more or less confined to the small group although I believe she could from within the security of that group enact a self, previously trialled at close quarters, on the larger and less familiar public stage of the whole class. Her class tutor created opportunities for this differentiation, through planned presentations by individuals. Catherine recognised the possibilities which were present for her “to impress” as others had done, rather than remaining in the background “just getting on with it... and having a laugh” at the show of competitiveness on display. She was however more directive in group tasks and talked about leading discussions. She clearly practised and presented different identities in different contexts but in group work what was a “durable” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 8) aspect of her was highly visible.

What was also evident in her account of the learning process was her changing identity. She appeared to be beginning to realise that the journey of self-making did not have to be an isolated one but could be undertaken in the company of others: “I’ve learned a lot about people that I took for granted and I realise that I’m learning more about them and understanding them better because of going into greater depth”.

She introduced notions of growing assimilation when she talked increasingly about a team and group spirit. She used the word “we” often:

I mean we are certainly beyond acquaintances. I mean, I don't think there is anyone in the class who wouldn't help me and I can't really think there is anyone in the class that I wouldn't help but I have got my sort of three closest allies if you like! Where we ... you know we ... we have a ... we do definitely have a bond and we do have a mutual trust and if there's areas of the class that we're unhappy about or concerns that we have, we all know, the four of us, that anything that we would say is confidential. You know, we trust each other. We do support each other and we can ask each other questions and I think what's good is we know each other's strengths and weaknesses now. So if you're struggling with something then, often we'll ask each other before we ask the teachers!

Clearly, she was beginning to understand that others in her group shared the same aspirations as her for transformation. Dialogue and exchange were at the heart of this change. She said it was hard to be independent in a class environment. Catherine was becoming increasingly drawn into a dynamic with others who shared the same objective of building an “I”. Her perception of herself was changing, not through formal learning but as a result of the gradual and willing fusion of self and other; of a dialogical relationship and a dialogical process which moved her progressively to new levels of selfdom through a willingness to “incorporate” (Holland and Lave, 2001) and through her will for change. Her speech for example and her views on parenting and on education had all altered as part of her overall plan for transformation.

Catherine regarded the learning process in FE as a unique life event in the sense that she attached to it the same properties for self-making and identity construction as the life-changing events of childhood, marriage and motherhood. But more importantly, its uniqueness lay in the control which she could exercise over that event,

customising it to fit and making it consistent with the other events which she had controlled such as marriage to Gordon. In Catherine's connection with the learning environment, change was clearly present as well as progress towards an envisaged identity. The construction of self was influenced by the learning process. It was a process where relationships, dialogue and communication and an enduring dialogicality present in Catherine's relationship with her context, acted as the levers to hasten her towards her desired objective. She was both constantly reflective in trying to understand those around her, and active in choosing to mirror as part of her own identity, those aspects of her "allies" which she was drawn to. It was also a process where unacknowledged identities such as a need for security, and new identities as a team player and a sense of the true value of other people, had developed in the spaces she had made her own.

Part of my summing up of Catherine's identity in the previous section suggested struggle and contradiction as central to the construction of her identity. For her contradiction lay in the ideal of academic study, undertaken to a large extent in isolation, leading to a change of lifestyle and a new professional identity practised in social, domestic as well as career settings. Set against this vision, was the unwilling reality of her background and the ordinariness of everyday life which included the hospitalisation of her son and the desire of her classmates to talk about more personal matters in class time.

I have demonstrated what changes had taken and were taking place as a result of Catherine's learning. The most important of these was not just her constant dialogicality in relation to her context, as a life feature, but a growing and deepening bond of self with other, within her classroom environment and a different setting

leading her away from struggle to the equally productive self-making concept of harmony within her environment. In her learning, she had begun to view things from another perspective, and had begun to integrate and practise a self increasingly with certain others. This evolved dialectic, as an expansion of her inner dialogue and reflexivity, was also where issues about identity construction, permanent change such as becoming a teacher were decided and resolved.

Evelyn: Describing learning

One of the most significant turning points in Evelyn's identity making had been the miners' strike. The conflict and inner struggle which it set up had led to the emergence of a resolute and increasingly confident self from within a more gentle and unobtrusive self-portrayal of dependent and supportive wife and mother. These contradictory and co-existent selves were both true representations of this one person. At the time of her college course Evelyn was therefore in transition and actively nurturing a changed and changing "I".

For Evelyn learning was a qualification; an externally set standard which she constantly strove to reach, against which she would be measured and which represented for her a stepping stone to more advanced stages of learning. She had hitherto been successful in this endeavour. At each phase of her learning journey, she had been uncertain and was continually in search of reassurances from other learners and from her two tutors. Learning as a gradual process very much represented a personal achievement for her as well as a qualification in itself. Its currency lay more

in objective recognition and valuing of her skills and abilities rather than any status value placed on the certificate by society.

Her learning choices of Psychology and Sociology and latterly Social Policy in her Care course, had been determined by what had been self-making events in her life. In studying these subjects she made connections between learning and the lives she had lived. She understood learning then to be a progressive self-making experience which built on and offered insights into past history and events; into for example, the Thatcher/Scargill confrontation. Learning also provided new ways of perceiving her current domestic context and her daughter's depression. In making these connections, Evelyn attributed the same importance to learning as to the events themselves.

Learning was also a resource to support her participation in her professional and wider life. She said that learning was finding out more about what "you are supposed to be doing". It had helped her talk to people better and deal with situations in her work and in her wider life. It was essentially about improvement:

So it is learning, it's just finding out more about what you're supposed to be doing. It's probably there anyway but I think it helps me, what I've learned, has helped me tae sorta tae talk to people better, you know, like ... and gointae situations better as well you know". She gave the example of Mary, one of her clients who had just been diagnosed with breast cancer when she visited her recently. She told me "if I hadn't been on this course, I might have kinda shied away myself and kinda ...oh sorry, Mary, hen ... just patted her on the head and ... right, that's you, there's your tea, don't worry about it. Somebody'll do something.

What was clear from her narrative was that learning was not about new knowledge and information. The learning process and the experience of learning had given her the opportunity to reflect on her experiences, to explore her views; and it had

awakened an academic interest, based on lived experience, of politics. She claimed it had not changed her views, for example on Muslims: "Have you changed your view, or do you still hold it?" (Question)... "slightly, huh-huh., huh-huh" (Reply)... "You still hold it?" (Question)... "I still hold it ... " (Reply)

Nor had she changed anyone else's view she said. The changes which she described rather than a change in her value system arrived at through intellectual or reasoned persuasion, were related to self and practice of self in groups. For example, she had become more "vocal" in class because she knew her fellow learners better and felt more relaxed. Her anti-conservatism was based on an ideology and therefore a political identity, arrived at through her own personal struggle in the eighties. She said she brought history and relationships to her learning situation. It was this self and point of view which she brought to her reading of Conservative policy in her course:

before we did like social policy, I wasn't really interested in politics or anything at all and although em, the miners strike was important and what have you, I didn't really sorta think about em, the Tories or the Labour party and their like kinda em ... ideologies, aye that's the word I was looking for. I didn't really sorta think about that but once I had started sorta researching it and then I thought 'Right, right' and now with this new election coming up I'll never vote Tory in a million years!

The most significant example of learning as a useable resource was what she said about her daughter's depression. Her learning experience had given her the wherewithal to come through "something that's been heavy going ...". In saying this she was referring not just to how she had helped her daughter, but how she herself had found the resources to cope emotionally and maintain a balance.

Self-making, learning and change

As I have previously indicated, Evelyn's whole narrative was cast in terms of a self-directed journey of self-making, self-belief and self-discovery. She had been as strategic in her authoring of this self-making event, as she had in other life events, carefully choosing her areas of study. Her college course had been a determined action to progress her "I" project, touching on identity constructed, identities practised and identity neglected. This was I believe, her expectation from her initial decision to start evening classes while working in the warehouse, followed quickly by each subsequent decision about further learning and her inner directive voice saying "give it a try".

Evelyn had identified a group with whom she was "friendly": "we always sit in the same seats". She migrated to that group at the start of each class. She spoke of two groups in the class and how the tutors often made them interact with individuals from the "other side". She then distinguished between these two communities, conveying familiarity with one group and a strong sense of difference with regard to the other.

The group she always worked within represented for Evelyn a comfortable space in the learning context which she had made for herself. There was a sense of community and bonding within this group which was made all the more evident when outsiders joined it. In her group, Evelyn could act in a way that was comfortable at all times, even to the point of holding an opposing viewpoint and acting on it such as her acceptance of an "incomer" despite peer disapproval.

Practising her own developing identities was possible for her here as her attitude to the "loud" new group member showed. Equally, her ever more assertive practice of a

naturally quiet self in the larger group, her stated increasing ability to speak out strongly when she felt inclined to without any feelings of anxiety, also showed changing and emerging identities. These changes, being more “relaxed and vocal in the class”, feeling “part of the class” whether actively participating or not, were the result of the learning process. She carried this changed self-perception and practice of selves into her wider life as was evident in her family dynamics and her attitude to young Jean, a fellow learner with whom she said she would “have to have a word” because she sensed that she had lost interest in her studies.

Evelyn’s participation in dialogue was not a unique or reliable indicator of a change process nor a factor for change: I’m very kind of quiet and kind of reserved sometimes...I like to sit back and just ...”. Listening to dialogue between others on the other hand was very significant for her. She reflected deeply and observed carefully: “I mean I’ve listened tae it and I’ve thought ‘Ah well, maybe, maybe you’re right, or maybe you’re wrong’ but usually I think well you know I’ve still got that sorta ... it might be a wee bit more watered down but I’ve still got that sort of point of view, in my head”. Discussions between other learners prompted the dialogicality as it had in other self-making events in her life. The internal processes which had led her to walk away from school and to marry a man who was in some ways unconventional led to the same independence of mind and action that was present in her learning context.

Self in relation to others and selfdom as part of a dialogical process of tension and opposition protected Evelyn’s self-interest and led to self-definition and change. She played out a dialogical relationship in listening to the larger group engage with the tutor over, for example, racism; when observing with amusement, the new learner to

the group discussion, noting her close group's reactions both towards her and the new participant; and when speaking about her friend Gail's interest in learning. It was a dialogical process that led to a welcome reappraisal of the years of the strike; and to a giving way and incorporation of other, exemplified in her attitudes to her professional practice and to her ability to act out her perceived difference to others around her.

It was this largely unvoiced and private dialogue which had given her a sense of "the rest of her life"; a love of professional caring for others, and confidence that what she wanted to do was possible. She had developed certainty in learning and an understanding of the fears and limitations within other people which made her in turn aware of her own potential. She had done this through an ongoing dynamic between self and others which generated ideas or plans, and which constantly led to an evaluation and taking stock. She frequently referred, for example, to what she wanted to do next and the constraints on her being only practical ones of time and money. Her dialogical relationship with her learning environment had led to her gradual self-construction. How she related to her environment had resulted in a surer and confident identity which she practised in her learning context. It was a dialogical process which reconnected her, I believe, to who she once was and what she left behind in leaving school and which led to an "altered self" (Marková, 2003).

She also had a desire to retain control. This was the reason I believe for her choosing, not any longer through a lack of confidence, to hold back in discussion. Engagement in discussion where she did not feel that "incorporation" (Holland and Lave, 2001, p. 14) was possible could have been an unwelcome interference in her self-making project. Rather than any giving up of aspects of self as part of an exchange with

others, or leaving any loopholes for contamination by other ideologies, Evelyn retained autonomy.

It was writing, however, which was a crucial aspect of her learning. It was, she said, the essay, and not her voice, which articulated what she was thinking:

Evelyn: I find when I'm doing ... when I'm writing ... I can actually express myself better when I'm writing, rather than speaking and as I say I always sorta log down wee things that have been said, or I've thought about and ... you know like ... when I'm writing it down it sort of starts to flow out, so I'll kinda use that in my essay and that's you know, em ... I think it's quite good, it sorta comes out and I can put it down in paper and I think ... right, that's what I'm thinking ... I don't find speaking hard. I mean I think I can sorta express myself but em ... I can let it flow better on paper!

Question: So your writing is about ... is part of your reflection process really?

Evelyn: Huh-huh, huh-huh, huh-huh.

Evelyn as an independent, self-making learner, had opened up a different dialogue which was more personal and was a crucial part of her in-depth self-understanding. It was in writing and not speech that she was able to express change and stability (Marková, 2003) both brought about by the dialogical process. She expressed her dialogicality mostly through the dialogical process of expressing herself through her written words. In her writing she explored change and expressed an established political conviction reinforced by recent learning. Through her writing she articulated her identities (in particular her academic identity) and expressed and constructed new identities. Her sheer pride at gaining a merit and her wish to share it and want others to read her essay indicated the importance of writing to her and was a further dialogical process through which she articulated her dialogicality and her changed and changing identities.

The learning process had not only confirmed writing as a generative process unique to her, but created the conditions whereby she could establish an engagement with others on her own terms. The learning experience had provided Evelyn with the opportunity to develop a process of learning, personal to her, whereby she could determine and control both the practice and construction of her identities.

Freda: Describing learning

Freda came to her learning as a survivor from a past of repression and subjugation, at the start of a journey towards active self-making and self-understanding. Her mother's death, two years ago, had led to a breakdown and her counselling had only very recently finished. Learning in FE was for her central to a gradual process of reconstruction of a self and "a finding process". She recognised the importance of qualifications, the gathering of information and development of skills in learning. The value of formal learning and paper qualifications to her was the chance to develop her intellectual skills such as astuteness leading to better understandings. Learning, she said, endorsed "in some ways what I already knew". Formal learning represented struggle, fear, challenge and usually achievement and it therefore had a major impact on self-confidence. What it did not do, however, was present the new. It was rather, an active resource and an energy which impelled her towards deep reflection; to examine the relationship between her religious beliefs and work as a carer and to conclude that they were both aspects of "who I am" and therefore one and the same. It had also led her to decide to focus her career on care in a religious environment as an expression of her growing perception of her identity.

Learning was also a means of bringing together her life experience and her professional experience and providing insight into the totality of these combined events and contexts. This sense-making and broadening process was mainly an outcome from hearing about other colleagues' experiences and work environments. Listening to others had made her more broad minded and therefore more open to change: "Oh well maybe I should try that ... I'm all for change ... but not for the sake of change ...". Freda understood learning to be essentially about interaction with people for the sake of people, with change at the heart of these encounters.

By far the most important aspect of learning for Freda then was the process and its underpinning of all aspects of her life. As a creative and intuitive person, learning helped her to "understand where a lot of people are coming from". Learning was not a confined process, and for her it had no boundaries; neither was it a timebound resource. It was lifelong, leading to never-ending renewal, essentially about and built into the life experience. The real value of learning for her lay in its association with those spiritual dimensions of inner growth. The power of learning as both a process and a resource was its capacity to create synergy and balance between the physical and the spiritual, to nourish and to ensure equilibrium.

Self-making, learning and change

Identity and "identity crisis" were major preoccupations for Freda and she mentioned these matters unprompted several times during our discussions. She had come to her course "still trying to find Freda in some ways ... I'm probably still looking". Learning in this further education class was therefore a context where she felt she

could construct a self on her own terms. In her learning context, she was at liberty to be and to practise a self and selves within a positive environment of growth and change by way of contrast with the previous highly controlled context of parental domination which extended until recently into her marriage and upbringing of her children. In this new, chosen self-making environment, she was able to respond creatively and spontaneously as part of her “working through” of issues of identity. She did this by moving around groups freely and engaging spontaneously, at different levels, in response to what she perceived as a strong connection and mutual ground.

Her practice of selves in the learning context was, as she described it, contradictory, unpredictable and volatile. She often presented an observer identity which was central to finding herself and self-making. She “gathered” in aspects of others for her own purposes of reflection and introspection; she was a “collection point of socially situated and culturally interpreted experience” (Holland and Lave, 2001, p. 19). She talked about “noticing” what other people did in the learning situation. In discussions with individuals or in small groups she described herself as often watching and listening and holding back. She had no “home” base but practised and explored her self-perceptions across a range of established classroom alliances.

At other times she presented a different self: taking action, exposing aspects of self, and leading discussions in a direction which suited her self-making mission. Guiding these practices of selves was a constant self/other process. As I have previously shown, a major feature of the “durable” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 8) aspect of her identity was a subjective and reflective process, through which she had constructed much of her identity. Her self-making had been, I have suggested, an internal rather

than an extroverted and participatory process. This dialogicality, a preoccupation with self in the context of other, and reflection, remained a dominant feature of Freda as a participant in learning: "I can understand where most of them are coming from... I can understand the conflict and problems they're facing in different things..." This suggests reflection. She spoke about "reading" a roomful of people. She liked to "get behind" what people were trying to say:

It's basically listening. I think that's the key to everything in some ways. But it's basically listening but not just listening but actually hearing what the person's saying because quite often a person doesn't actually say what they mean! So you have to develop the skill of getting behind what are they really wanting to say here, or what are they trying to say?

For Freda, this interaction leading to what she referred to as bringing things out of people that were "qualities" in herself and then getting them "to talk about them", of surfacing common ground as a means of self-knowledge, was a clear example of a deeply reflective and therefore dialogical and generative process. Her identity construction was based on arriving at representations of self through her perceptions of commonality or difference in relation to other learners.

Evolving an "I" through "finding herself" as part of a dialogical relationship with her environment was central to these activities. Freda combined her "intimate and personal world with the collective space of cultural forms and social relations" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 5) within her learning context where communication, often unspoken, was central.

This dialogicality was also evident in how she exercised judgement, choice and control in her learning context. She said she quite often remained passive even when she felt she could have led the discussion herself. She often stood aside and took

stock of herself, removing herself emotionally from the situation. At other times, when she felt safe and comfortable enough to disclose details of her life and to discuss aspects of identity and selves which she felt she had in common with certain individuals, she engaged very fully. These decisions were taken on the basis of assessed risk in terms of damage to herself and with her clearly stated objective of finding and making a self through interactions with others.

It was sensed mutuality which offered Freda safe spaces for this openness: "you are attracted to the people that have the same understanding as yourself ..." and these opportunities presented themselves often unexpectedly: "I find myself bringing things out in people ...". Such trusting and instinctive encounters which laid her open to change through self-exposure, were dictated in her case not by habit or growing familiarity, but by feelings, and what Holland and Lave (2001) describe as a sense of "I for myself" (p.18).

There is a constant sense of Freda as a solitary individual within a large group setting where her powerful dialogicality was generally dispersed rather than a feature of established relationships. Perhaps she saw herself at an early stage of self-making and self-understanding, and to confine herself to one group might have been too limiting. Perhaps she had still not built stable trusting relationships which were generative and where self-making and change were constant possibilities. However, although volatile, where she sensed an opportunity in whatever group she found herself in, she was both suddenly decisive and strong, leading the conversation and developing the dynamic which could take both her and others forward. She "improvised" in Holland et al.'s terms (1998, pp.17-18) to good effect.

In her account, and as an outcome of this dialogical relationship, there was a clear sense of change. The learning process, her productive interactions in the classroom, the flashes of deep connection and growing ability to relate meaningfully as part of a wider journey of building a self, had helped her to see that she had “come a long way” and had therefore gone some way towards the forging of her identity through self-understanding. She had developed an awareness of change and of her journey, and was able to comment continually on it in relation to her learning context. She spoke about having learned quite recently about aspects of herself and how she dealt with others; about how people become “more real and open” through interacting. She talked about changing her work practice as a result of hearing what others had to say. She talked about gains in self-confidence which were evident in her strategic engagement of other individuals. She clearly linked the processes of change, defining herself and understanding self and learning.

I have described what Freda understood learning to be. I have shown the deep significance of learning in Freda’s life and her search for identity. I have shown how she went about this in her learning context and how she practised her dispersed selves across her learning environment. Consistent with my previous summing up of Freda, I found that she was equally preoccupied with self and self-making in the learning context. She regarded learning as a total process encompassing the classroom and her wider life. In associating learning with a harmonising of spiritual belief and values and professional ideals and practice it was clear that she saw learning as a unique opportunity for the strengthening of her dialogicality and for the construction and practice of identities.

Choice and control increased as her certainty and a sense of balance and resolution grew. Her irrepressible compulsion based on dialogicality, to practise herself and to reconstruct herself possibly with some external support such as her counsellor, was evident in the determination she showed and expressed.

Moving on

In this chapter I have located each of the five key participants in this research within their learning settings. I did this by describing two classroom learning settings in FE: an HNC Social Care class and an Access to Teaching class. I focused on the objectives of the courses themselves and the contributions which the teachers made to them in terms of their understandings of learning and their role in the process. I concluded that both courses had change and transformation as their objective. I also concluded that these teachers shared a particular view of the learning they provided within these courses. They located learning within the broad context of learners' lives and they regarded the process of learning as a period of transition between where learners had come from and what lay ahead for them. Their role was to ensure that the changes within individuals, new identities and differently inflected identities created through the process of learning, would lead to the transformation of their wider contexts and self-practice and self-making within them.

Secondly, I gave an account of each participant within his/her specific as well as a common learning context. I described each individual's understanding of learning and then explored how learning offered opportunities for dialogical processes, for self-making and the construction of identity for each. I also showed the possibilities

for each participant for practising dispersed identities and durable selves within both their specific learning context and the general context of the classroom. By way of contrast with West's (1996) assertion that students exclude and even repress the more personal parts of a story when asked about why they participate in learning and what learning means to them, these participants spontaneously offered their individual and distinct accounts. In the previous chapter, I set out their highly individual accounts of the events, experiences and relationships in their lives which in their view were central to their self-making and identities. In this chapter, I have set out their accounts of the learning process and experience as further examples of self-making events and contexts for selfdom. Each story both fleetingly captured aspects of individual identities in practice in two further education classrooms and gave an account of live identity construction through the learning process.

The work of Haggis (2002) explores how learning is defined, researched and theorised. In her study of adult learners where postgraduate learners speak about their learning experience in Higher Education, Haggis (2002) states that rather than searching for generaliseable patterns, she highlights difference. Her findings suggest that patterns of learning among adults are not easily identifiable and that learning is a highly individual enterprise. My findings to a large extent support this view.

There was considerable difference among my participants in the "practice" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 271) of selves in their learning settings. What is not consistent with Haggis is that there was also an undeniable convergence in relation to participants' understandings of what represents learning and what its purpose is. My conclusion is that both of these further education learning settings were similar in that they were highly conducive to individual self-making and to the practice of variable selves.

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEARNING AND IDENTITY

CHAPTER 6 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEARNING AND IDENTITY

learning is ubiquitous in ongoing activity. It is a participatory act – a profoundly social and cultural phenomenon, not simply a cognitive process... (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 2000, p. 589).

In the previous chapter I gave an account of how each key participant viewed and defined learning and set out their accounts of their learning process and experience in two FE learning contexts.

In this chapter I will set out what I consider my research says about the relationship between learning and identity in relation to the five key research participants. I will begin by stating what I understand learning to be from my reading of the literature and then summarise how these participants described learning and its purpose. I will then outline what my research says about these five participants' practice and construction of identity in these two specific FE learning contexts. I will focus particularly on dialogicality and dialogical processes: dialogue and language and non-verbal communication and emotion. I will also consider the classroom as a force for change. Finally, on the basis of my research findings I will summarise what I consider to be the relationship between learning and identity in these two specific FE learning contexts in relation to five key participants.

My understanding of learning

My review of the literature led me to understand learning as a process shaped by particular sets of values leading to learners' active engagement with knowledge. It confirmed my view that learners' identities are intrinsic to learning processes and contexts and that learning is inextricably linked to personal transformation and change. I also realised the central importance of transaction through dialogue within the learning process. I concluded at the end of my literature review that concepts of personal transformation, of identity both practised and altered through the learning process and of dialogue were all integral to the process of learning. I also began to consider the potential for some particular learning contexts to be sites for self-making, the practice of identity and transformation. My understanding of learning was borne out in how the five key participants, the wider group of participants and their teachers described learning and its purpose.

Participants' descriptions of learning and its purpose

My research shows that for all the key participants, learning in these particular FE contexts represented a process and an experience. They acknowledged the importance of knowledge acquisition and qualifications, but for them these "formal" aspects of learning were both distinct from, and took their place within, a broader concept of learning. In answering the question, "what is learning?" the formal aspects of learning, of qualifications and knowledge were not primarily how they described learning or its purpose, and were not what was principally important to them. For them learning was a totality of classroom process and experience which

was strongly interconnected with their wider social and personal environments. The classroom experience in these two FE contexts underscored the lives they had lived as well as their present contexts. It offered insights into their current and past lives and altered their perceptions. These re-formulations of their history and of their present opened the way for change to take place and enabled altered visions of their future. For these participants, learning represented a continually enriching interchange between classrooms and their wider past and present contexts of work, social, domestic and community life.

The key participants saw learning as a continual process of engagement and it was clear to me that their transactions between the learning process and experience and their wider lives were conducted through the agency of themselves. While the explicit purpose of participating in learning activities was to develop knowledge and skills, all the participants saw the role of learning as helping them to understand and work better with other people. Their accounts exemplified this improved ability to engage. They described classroom relationships and strengthening bonds as people got to know each other better, and spoke of changed engagements outside the learning environment. Bob's account of how his developing compassion altered his professional relationships is one example of this; Catherine's increased ability to transact in her social group outside college and Evelyn's account of her ability to engage with and help her client Mary as a result of what she had learned are further evidence of this improved ability to engage. Learning for these participants was a live resource for the lives they were currently living and potentially for future lives.

Participants and their teachers saw the learning process and the classroom as a space to which learners brought their entire life experience, their feelings about events and

relationships and their articulations of themselves. Their human and emotional histories were continually present within the process and experience of learning; these histories affected, and were affected by, the learning experience. There were continual exchanges between the learning process and experience and the human contexts of struggle and harmony of the participants' lives. These exchanges were a basis and a dynamic for change and were themselves susceptible to change.

The teachers' views of learning, which focused on the specific learning process and participants' wider social development, led them to shape the learning contexts so that they could manage the gradual changes that learning brought about in participants. They provided learners with opportunities for the practice of selves and maintained a view of the learners' changing identities within their wider social contexts, i.e. by encouraging learners to draw on and refer to their wider life experiences as a basis for engagement in the learning process. Participants' expectations of learning and their desire for change and different lives also acted as shaping factors within these two learning contexts, making them generative spaces for the changes they willingly sought and for change enactment. As a result of their learning they also perceived their wider lives as contexts for the practice of altered selves and for identity construction. For example, as a result of the process and experience of learning, Evelyn's emerging identity of professional and developing academic which she increasingly articulated through her learning activities also caused her to transform her family life departing from generations of past custom, expectations and the traditional culture of her community.

Previously, I identified how participants described certain events in their lives as significant in terms of what made them who they are; the impact of alcohol and

gambling additions, marital fulfilment and maternal love. The central focus they gave learning within the narratives of their life events and the impact on their wider lives that they ascribed to it suggests that these learning experiences in these FE colleges were a major influence in shaping their identities and were a significant self-making event for them. Furthermore, unlike many self-making events in the individual histories of these participants, their decisions to engage in learning in these further education contexts, and to locate themselves in these change-making settings were reached through dialogicality and taken with care and conviction. Their re-engagement with formal learning represented a self-directed move at a time of their choosing into new and uncharted territory and a chosen “turning-point” (Denzin, 1989) event. Anthea, Bob, Evelyn, Catherine and Freda had come to their current formal learning at a crucial point in their lives. The same was true for the other participants in this study. One participant from the wider group stated that “life changed when my marriage finished”, and it was at that time of change that she returned to learning: “I have been away from education too long”. For another, learning in order to gain a career in teaching was about creating a new start and securing emotional and financial independence. For another participant going back to learning and realising her original aspirations to become a primary teacher was prompted by the life changing event of telling her husband to leave their home because he had had an affair.

The practice of identity in learning

In their learning contexts the five key participants enacted altered, inflected and found identities. They also confidently articulated permanent aspects of their

identities and of selves forged through their histories. It was clear from their accounts that they felt increasingly comfortable in their learning settings and able to enact and present identities shaped through their responses to events in their past and to their current wider social contexts.

It was also clear that dialogicality guided their selective practice of selves in the classroom. Catherine brought a high degree of selection and control to her learning setting; through the inner reflective and review processes of her dialogicality, she repressed those aspects of selfhood which were in any way inconsistent with the self she wanted to present and practised a self which was generally predictable. Anthea practised a range of selves in the classroom while reserving other selves for other contexts. She could be both light-hearted and purposeful. In her learning setting she perceived herself as at times, forceful, decisive, and assertive; as well as relaxed, submissive, restrained; open to being influenced. She chose to share her love of dancing and music with established friends in her class. However, her more artistic side and the more sensitive aspects of her identity (her love of birds, seeing “the grass grow”), she generally reserved to herself.

There was evidence of consistency and of change and difference in key participants’ practice of permanent aspects of their identities in the classroom. For example, Freda’s continual search for meaningful connection, a permanent aspect of her identity, was evident in the classroom, while Catherine’s need to be in control, a permanent aspect of her identity, was beginning to be changed through a developing tendency to seek out her chosen group and succumb to the concept of “we”.

Flexibility, response and improvisation which Holland et al. (1998) suggest are central to self-making in local social contexts were all features in the key

participants' practice and making of selves in the learning settings. Furthermore they were also highly responsive to their new self-making contexts of specific literacies (Hamilton et al., 1994, p.2), relationships, norms and structures. This was particularly evident in their language and behaviour in the small groups. Bob's growing responsiveness to Gail and Kathleen is an example of this as is Evelyn's open response to a new member of her small group.

It was clear that the small groups were chosen prime spaces for the key participants, places for an ever more comfortable dialogical process to take place, places to be, to reflect and to grow from. They were contexts where they could externalise permanent identities, and practise new selves.

The construction of identity in learning

Learners all acknowledged some change in their identities as a result of learning. Struggle and harmony which had been so significant for self-making in their lives were equally important in the contexts of their learning. Within the harmonious and contested social environments of the FE classrooms in which these participants had willingly located themselves, the learning process and experience had led to a dislodging or confirmation of ideas, values, practices, ideologies and self.

From the accounts of the key participants, the most significant factor in creating these changes in their identities was the powerful bonding of one person to the other leading to the resultant transformation of both. For example, Bob referred to the importance of "personality" in bringing about change. He was clear that his relationship with his fellow student Gail affected him at a deep level. Like close

friends and family their relationship in the learning context represented a space where permanent change could take place.

It was clear from what they said about their fellow students that their relationships with some individuals and groups had been particularly significant in relation to their self-making and their practice of selves within their learning settings. They spoke about individuals to whom they were “drawn” and of their immediate, small and chosen circles of new and developing relationships which were very “me”. They described these relationships as transformative, as sites where selves were made. One learner, for example, discussed her relationships with reference to a group of four people with whom she shared common interests and values despite different home lives: “it’s quite strange that we’ve formed this wee group but we all get on so well. We’re all so different”. She talked about the bonds of these relationships and their effect on her which had been to make her “slightly stronger ... I’ve never really had, because of all the moves, a close friendship with anybody ... it’s brought me confidence and something I’ve not had before ... stability”.

In my interviews with the key participants they talked of the members of their small groups as people they naturally migrated towards or felt some connection with and from whom they increasingly accepted different viewpoints. There was evidence in what they said that this openness to different viewpoints resulted in them adopting changed positions that in turn led to shifts in their identity which they enacted in these and wider contexts. Through the dialogical processes within the small groups in these two classrooms, generative tensions, oppositions and polarities presented themselves. The “loopholes” (Marková, 2003) between self and other created opportunities for self-definition and the construction of new identities and for change

to take place. Evelyn indicated that the bonds which she had forged in the small group had enabled her to be more relaxed and vocal in the wider class group and increasingly able to comment freely without thinking about what she was going to say before speaking.

The close relationships of the small group also provided the impetus for excursions into the more challenging contexts of the wider group where further Ego/Alter (Marková, 2003) possibilities could be explored. Through the “confidence (gained) from one another” (teacher) and sustained by proven success, the key participants could migrate to a wider world within the classroom where they could increasingly, through choice, present a “whole self” (teacher’s comments) and new selves.

They could also in that wider world be discerning about relationships with others. For example, Catherine recognised that she had at times “learned more” from some rather than others in the wider group. Therefore, the learning process provided opportunities for identification with or a standing back from aspects of others, their identities, views and practices.

Teachers also recognised the construction and transformation of identity, through and in the small groups. They described small groups as being places where the “whole self is” and where permanent aspects of self are increasingly present. They talked of interdependency in small groups, of a developing sense of shared values and increasing safety for learners to be themselves and to explore identities:” feeling it’s ok to say” (teacher’s comment).

Dialogicality in learning

Dialogicality, an inherent human characteristic articulated through dialogical processes, was as evident in the key participants' accounts of their self-making journeys in their learning contexts as it was in their accounts of their wider lives. It was a constant determinant of the practice and construction of their identities in these learning contexts.

The accounts from key participants showed how dialogicality prompted by their learning processes led to new perceptions of their history, their current context and their future. For example, Evelyn's new vision of herself as a potential counsellor and Catherine's increased distancing of herself from her past and her affirmed movement towards a professional career and lifestyle.

There was clear evidence of dialogicality, of continuous interactions between inner reflective and review processes and openness and engagement with others, in the accounts of each of the five key participants. The part that dialogicality played was clear in how the five key participants spoke of selves in relation to others and their reflections on others; their descriptions of their enactments of identities; the positions they adopted in relation to others, and the actions they took leading to changed selves. It was clear to me that that the inner reflective processes of dialogicality had guided their self-moving into dialogical processes which led to changed selves, for example, Freda talked of how she moved from group to group and from individual to individual questioning people about themselves as part of what she described as her search for her identity. Her variable practice of selves in her learning context was also clear from her account.

There was also evidence of dialogicality in the learning context in Anthea's account of her open mindedness, her strategic self-making and her constant desire to exercise choice and control based on careful judgment. In the social policy essay that Evelyn shared with me there was evidence of how her inner reflective processes had led her to reframe her experiences during the miners' strike and she talked to me about how the writing of the essay had led her to see herself differently.

From the interview data it was very clear that the five key participants continually assessed and took stock of their learning context and reflected and acted upon the insights, perceptions and self-definitions they gained through their dialogical processes in the classroom. It was clear from their accounts that they were all purposeful in their self-making and that as part of this they expected their learning processes and experiences to be transformative. This was reflected in their openness to others in the classroom and their willingness to be influenced and changed through their engagements with other learners and with their teachers. They described their learning setting to me in those terms: speaking about groupings, relationships, how and where they learned best, how they felt about individuals, why they moved around, where they directed their attention and dialogue, and what factors for change and transformation they perceived.

The reflective inner processes of their dialogicality were evident in their highly strategic approach to their learning contexts. They positioned themselves and "marked" individuals (Holland and Lave, 2001, pp.10-14; they identified the "close-to-home" and all but Freda, worked within and outwards from an identified base. It could also be inferred that through dialogicality they could be increasingly selective

about the practice of selves in the classroom. For example, Bob talked of “holding back” of “being diplomatic” and of deciding to argue a point forcefully.

Indeed all five key participants exercised control and choice over any influence from others in the learning setting. Change through influence was permissible only within certain contexts and in certain specific circumstances determined by the participants themselves. Catherine allowed herself to blend with her group of learning friends but rejected class discussions that were not in her view relevant. Anthea talked of reviewing the relevance of the views of others and deciding what to accept and reject.

There was also evidence of changed views of selves in action implying dialogicality as a result of the learning process. For example, Evelyn’s recognition that she thought about and handled the situation with her client Mary in a different way because of what she had learnt on her course and Bob’s recognition of his changing attitudes to women and how he was selective in his articulation of these changing attitudes i.e. not choosing to articulate these changing attitudes in his conversations with his male friends in the pub.

Dialogue and language, non-verbal communication and emotion as dialogical processes in learning

As I indicated previously I understood from my literature review that dialogicality is articulated through and co-incidental with the dialogical processes of action, word, deed, improvisation and response. My research findings confirmed that understanding and also highlighted the particular roles of spoken dialogue, non-

verbal communication and emotion in the key participants' articulation of their dialogicality and identities.

Spoken dialogue was central to the exchanges within learning groups and to the relationships between self and other. Bob referred to the effectiveness of an approach to learning which involved interaction through dialogue; and learners from both FE courses expressed appreciation of the emphasis on dialogue as a vehicle for learning. They compared their current learning experiences to less successful learning where the emphasis had been more on the use of resources such as IT, and on lectures and self-study. In their accounts the five key participants talked of how learning dialogues helped them to understand, provided an alternative method of expressing information and in some cases persuaded them towards a new viewpoint.

Running throughout these spoken dialogues, initially within "close to home" relationships, was what Holland and Lave (2001) have referred to as a "decentred dialogical self" (p.13); a giving way to the views of others leading to a merging of self with chosen others. Anthea's continuing, slow struggle against her "racism" was prompted by discussions with a close friend and continual dialogue with a tutor whom she admired, resulting on the one hand in her comment about immigrants to Scotland "they' steal the eyes oot the back o'yer heid" and on the other the expression of an emerging awareness of "I don't want to be racist", using a term learned from her classroom interactions.

As I showed in my representations of the identities of the five key participants, language genres and "codes" (Dossena, 2005) were significant in spoken dialogue, and were closely associated with the self-making, dialogicality and identities of the five key participants. I found the key participants' language, like their identities,

variable, responsive, complex and flexible. Their language evoked past contexts and represented and explored new identities. Through the vernacular, which emerged at very specific points in the participants' accounts, language voiced the intimate; and through participants' careful use of "codes" they were able, for example, to drain narratives of their emotional content thereby making the telling of their difficult stories easier. These features were clear in Bob's use of language which reflected his disciplined military background and in Anthea's use of the vernacular in recounting the death of her partner Danny. Catherine's move towards a middle class professional milieu was also visible in her choice of language. I consider that the key participants' dialogue, particularly when expressed through the vernacular and careful use of language which was coded, was in itself an articulation of dialogicality and identity and a clear indicator of changed and changing identities and self in process.

These altered and newly constructed identities were evident in Anthea's spontaneous use of the vernacular and her tactical use of a more formal language when talking about her mother with whom she had a difficult relationship. Her language showed: her struggle with her emotions and her hurt; her increasing ability to manage these feelings through a professional language with which she calmly asserted a sense of duty; changed perceptions and an evolving new identity.

In these classrooms language was not only an articulation of dialogicality, of selves and changing identities, it also represented a space in which identity was continually contested. In adopting a pedagogical stance which recognised the dialogicality of their learners and encouraged dialogical processes of interaction and spoken dialogue, the teachers created and maintained a learning context where learners'

identities could be constructed and articulated. The three FE teachers referred to the importance of dialogue. One teacher talked of making conscious efforts to vary the types of dialogue used within the learning context. She referred, for example, to structured whole class dialogue and to small group dialogue where students learned to listen to the opinions of others and to defend their points of view. Another teacher stated that dialogue was “totally, totally important ... a major tool”.

The FE teachers also used language tactically in order to bring about necessary transformations in their learners. They overlaid a technical language and professional terminology on the recounted personal and work experiences of their learners, thus providing them with a new means of describing their histories and contexts; a tool they could deploy in order to participate more fully in the social settings of their learning contexts. Most importantly, by assisting learners to extend their linguistic repertoire, teachers also increased the means by which the learners could choose to present and practise selves and voice new insights, altered dialogicality and altered identities.

Although neither Marková (2003) and Holland et al. (1998) make a great deal of mention of the role that emotion plays in the dialogical process, I found from the key participants’ accounts that emotion and unspoken communication were key components of their dialogicality and heavily influenced their dialogical processes.

The data from transcripts provide more evidence of feeling and emotion associated with self-making and the self-making opportunities within these learning settings than I can record. Even more difficult to capture in this written piece, are voice, movement and facial expression. Feelings about the learning process, about certain “marked” people and “close to home” groups and most of all about changed self in

response to learning, were overwhelmingly and strongly evident within the discussions about the learning process. Teachers too focused a great deal on the issue of emotion in relation to learning. They themselves expressed emotion when they spoke and prompted emotional responses in their learners. One teacher spoke of learners having had “a rough deal”; also, when talking to one of her students about her work, the teacher asked “were you embarrassed?”. The learner replied: “och a wee bit”. “That’s just what I intended” the teacher said. On another occasion she said to her class: “look I’m struggling to get this ... you need to help me help you”.

Another teacher talked about “my kind of baby” when referring to anti-discriminatory issues. He moved the conversation on to how important it was for him to be seen as genuine with his learners even if that meant revealing issues about his private life. A third teacher said that if people don’t feel safe in a learning environment, safe about what they know and understand, safe enough to express and develop emotion “change will not take place”. She went on to say that “empathy is quite a crucial step ... developmental step before learning’s easy”. On the subject of barriers to learning she mentioned traumatic situations and the impact of these on feelings and ability to learn. Another issue she raised was the impact on an individual of peer pressure and feelings of comfort and discomfort. Teachers also spoke of burning motivation and how although some learners might be initially fearful: “at the start they may have been very frightened in case they are going to say the wrong thing ...” (teacher’s comment) they were motivated by the feeling that the time was right for them to return to formal learning.

Individual participants from the wider group also spoke about strong emotion as part of their learning experience in FE:

you couldnae buy the feeling from anywhere ... I would hate to lose this feeling. aye, aye, suddenly. Aye you're growing. I feel as if I ... I don't know. Growing. I think that's the word aye (K).

Another group member said:

you can feel it...it comes to a point where it's (having family) is not quite enough and doing this allows you to be a person in your own right ... you get your name back". There was wholehearted agreement with her about finding bits of self left behind and bringing that back as part of the learning process. Yet another said she was "I've never really had, because of all the moves a close friendship with anybody ... it's (learning) brought me confidence and something I've not had before.

One participant from the wider group spoke with some emotion about her feelings of inferiority in relation to her former husband's family and to him: "now I don't feel inferior to anyone because I'm more confident about the type of person that I am ... I'm not thick".

The classroom as a force for change

I found that these specific learning settings promoted dialogicality and dialogical processes within the five key participants who were the focus of my study. These specific learning settings provided space for both a reckoning and a reconciliation of all the self-making events of these participants' past, current contexts and the learning process through an evolving dialogicality articulated through, and visible within, speech. I consider that the learning processes in these FE colleges prompted and were central to the five key participants' construction and practice of identity. I consider that these FE teachers created the conditions for identity construction and practice by recognising the dialogicality of learners and creating learning contexts

where dialogical processes, the articulation of dialogicality, were integral to how knowledge was acquired. Equally, participants themselves motivated by their own aspirations and expectations, valued and initiated and engaged in these dialogical processes and recognised how they contributed to their self-making. Together these teachers and their learners made the learning setting an environment of dialogical relationships and processes; a potential site for identity construction and the practice of selves.

The convergence of purpose and intention of both participants and teachers in relation to the learning experience and process made of these classrooms, arguably, a contextual and generative *habitus*. Through the non-verbal dialogical processes of reflexive relationships, the synergy which the participants and teachers created between the learning experiences and the learners' wider lives, the unarticulated feelings, self-perceptions and aspirations for changed selves and the enactments of changed and changing identities, the learning contexts became continually potentially transforming forces for change.

Summing up

... learning is tightly bound up with matters of identity and situation and cannot be extracted from them (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 2000, p. 595).

The aim of this research was to explore the relationship between learning and identity in relation to five key participants studying in two particular Scottish FE courses. I believe that this study has confirmed that relationship and the significance of it for the five key participants. They located learning processes and experiences

alongside major life changing events and associated them with self-making and identity practice. They saw learning as a central means of creating change in their lives and in the construction and practice of their identities in college and in their wider worlds. They looked to learning to be transformational and cited examples of how they had changed through it and how they anticipated further change through it. They recognised that the combination of their learning processes and experiences and their wider life experiences represented significant self-making opportunities for them.

My research also points to the central role that dialogicality plays in the key participants' self-making. I found that their accounts confirmed that it was their self-directing inner dynamic and generative process of dialogicality that prompted and influenced their enactment of aspects of selves and construction of new selves. There was evidence in their accounts that dialogicality was an inherent and permanent aspect of their identities which was guiding and moving forward their identity construction in their current learning contexts and wider lives just as it had previously in earlier stages of their lives.

The key participants' dialogicality and their constructions and presentations of selves were articulated and enacted through dialogical processes. They indicated that the dialogical processes which they initiated and maintained in their learning contexts with certain "marked" others and "close-to-home" groups were particularly significant in building and practising selves.

I found that dialogue was central to these dialogical processes and a main means whereby the key participants re-integrated their altered and transformed identities within their bonding relationships with other learners. Participants' continuous

development and choice of linguistic genres and codes was also significant and provided a means of voicing the transformations to, and affirmations of, their identities which had been brought about through the process and experience of learning in further education.

My research also showed that as well as spoken communication and deed that emotion and unspoken communication (also aspects of dialogicality) were central to the key participants' self-making and transforming relationships.

Finally my research shows that the dialogical learning contexts created and maintained in these particular FE learning sets strengthened the relationship between learning and identity.

In conclusion, I found that these two FE settings offered unprecedented and highly focused opportunities for these learners through their dialogicality to construct and practise new aspects of self. They provided the means whereby the wider contexts of the participants' lives and their learning contexts could be brought into dialogical relationship with each other, leading to transformed views of the participants' histories, their current situations and their futures.

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEARNING AND IDENTITY

CHAPTER 7 LOOKING BACK, AROUND AND AHEAD

In this study I have sought to explore the relationship between learning and identity in relation to five people. I believe that in this thesis I have given an account of the impact that learning had on these five learners' identities, on their self-making, their lives, their social and domestic contexts and their futures. My hope is that my study will open up further discussion on the issue and that it will add to a growing body of research within Scottish FE. On a broader front, I hope that it will add to a wider discussion among researchers interested in issues of identity within learning, as well as the role of biography, dialogue and language in relation both to identity and to learning generally.

I think a significant aspect of my research and study is how I combined the themes of identity, biography and dialogue, drawn from diverse literatures, to offer a different perspective on learning. My research offers to the academy a particular focus on the dynamic relationship between identity construction and practice and learning. By exploring good practice in relation to five learners in two specific FE learning settings, I believe my research offers examples of how there is potential for learners' dialogicality to be encouraged and voiced through the use of dialogue as a major learning tool. I therefore believe that my research could contribute to debates about teacher skills and training and the development and adoption of learning models that encourage and value learners' inherent inner processes of reflection and review.

Looking back, around and ahead

On looking back on how I have presented the five key participants in this thesis I am aware that there were a variety of other ways that I might have done so. I could have for example, provided readers with larger sections of participant accounts, thereby allowing the participants to speak directly to readers. It would also have been possible to have explored the use of technology as a means of providing unmediated, live and even visual representations.

I found that the presentations of the identities of the five key participants were scattered, untidy and often buried within words and even gestures and facial expressions which occurred naturally and therefore often randomly across accounts lasting several hours and spanning some forty pages of transcript. For that reason I thought it was best to mediate their accounts and to highlight the richness of what they expressed about their lives and their learning. I feel I did this with respect and sensitivity, and on reading what I have written I feel that the essence of each of the five participants and the nature and quality of our engagements are evident. However, I thought it was important to provide an example of the transcript of one interview to show the nature of the data I worked from and allows the reader to view the transcript against the mediated accounts (Appendix, 7).

Giddens (1991) suggests that identity is an area of common and developing interest because we live, in the twenty first century, in a period of high modernism which has resulted in heightened reflexivity:

Self-identity becomes a reflexively organised endeavour. The reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems. The more tradition loses its hold, and the

more daily life is reconstituted in terms of the dialectical interplay of the local and global, the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options. (Giddens, 1991, p.5).

His view is that in a world of globalising influences, where the norms and traditions we have known are subject to “disembedding mechanisms” (p.2), the individual is thrown back on “personal dispositions” (p.1) and has to look inwards to discover a self in a broader and novel environment. Nothing can be assumed any longer; nothing taken for granted. In a search for personal meaningfulness, we must re-invent our daily social lives.

I support this assertion not only because it lends support to my own interest in identity but because if we are indeed engaged in introspection, and in seeking and re-defining self in ever-moving, complex and expanding worlds, as Giddens suggests, then it may be that education must now both align and define its self differently. Educators should arguably re-position themselves in a climate of self-questioning and change, continually seeking new opportunities and forms of communication to enable individuals continually to forge and practise selves. It is this new focus for education, of identities amidst shifting sands, of locating individuals for the present and future, for themselves and for a world of “transformed reality” (Freire, 2006, p.2) based on the truth and practice of selfdom, that my thesis points to.

Giving Life Meaning

Fullan (1993) writes: “the key is for teachers to “see themselves and be seen as experts in the dynamics of change” (p.4). The greatest need he goes on is for people

to “find and give meaning to life” (Fullan, 1999, p.82). It is I believe, through meaningful lives that societies thrive.

From what I have learned through my study I believe that within an age of new and evolving perspectives on life, work and relationships and self-discovery, we need a different focus for learning and its purpose. My belief is that teachers and policy-makers need to continue to connect with learners in their self-building and to set in place processes which nourish a communal endeavour of self and society. We need to seek to be at all times “open to the life experience” (Freire, 2004, p. 73) and to becoming continually self-making professionals able to create learning and policy environments which provide for learners a means of “finding and giving meaning to life” (Fullan, 1999).

I introduced this thesis by describing a mentored, loving and supportive journey undertaken by two people, Dante and Virgil. I introduced notions of a spiritual dimension in learning culminating in transformation. This part of my journey is now complete but my hope is that another professional and dialogical journey leading to further ideological change might begin.

At a more personal level, I have found this learning experience transforming. It has affected how I view myself and how others view me. It has tested some relationships and strengthened others and it has provided me with opportunities to explore, find and make new identities. Most of all through my journey of learning and research, like Dante’s journey and that of the key participants who joined me in this journey, I have been able not only to come home, but to look to a transformed future, different identities and an altered communication and dialogue with learners, practitioners, HMI colleagues and policy-makers with whom I continue to travel.

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Appendix 1

67 Woodfield Park
Edinburgh
EH13 0RA
1 November 2004

Ms Janet Lowe
Principal
Lauder College
Halbeath,
Dunfermline
Fife KY11 8DY

Dear Janet,

Field work leading to doctoral thesis (Ed.D)

I am most grateful to you for agreeing to my conducting research in Lauder College.

I am now writing to suggest periods of time when I hope to visit the college and to provide further information about what I had hoped to do whilst there. My overall plan is attached but I hope that when we meet, we can agree actual dates within these time bands which will allow us both to plan and structure visits well ahead.

I realise that since the planned field work is a bit spread out, my request may well be burdensome for all concerned – planners, those who agree to participate in ongoing discussions, and those whom I hope to observe teaching. I am therefore very appreciative of your support.

You know that the topic for my research is the *contribution of dialogue in specific learning settings* and I sincerely hope, that the discourse which these observations and visits will open up, as well as my reflections as the project progresses and my ultimate findings will be of use to you in your ongoing work with staff and learners on the subject of learning. During and after the period of my engagement with your college therefore (February – September) I would be more than happy to make a contribution to staff or learner groups as you feel appropriate.

After the initial sampling phase, I would hope to identify a class and a group within that class with whom I can interact on a regular basis; this involvement would be entirely voluntary and it is important for learners to know that confidentiality will be maintained at all times during and after the field work. This applies equally to lecturers/teachers.

I am very much looking forward to working with you, your staff and students once again and in a very different role! I am conscious of the potential for confusion about my HMI work and this and will seek to do my best to draw distinctions between them to staff I interact with.

Once again, many thanks.

Kind regards,

Anne

Appendix 2

LEARNER INTERVIEW (Initial)

Name of learner:

Code:

School/college:

Course:

Date:

A. WHAT IS PERCEIVED AS LEGITIMATE LEARNING AND WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?

Legitimate learning

- What do you see as learning? What would you count as learning? Are there things which go on in the classroom which you would not call learning? Is it all learning?
- What do you yourself want from your learning? Is this different do you think from what the teacher wants you to learn?

- What other things do you get from being at school/college? What sort of things do you get from being part of a class? Is it important to be part of a class or a group learning together? Is it better to work on your own?
- Do you learn different things from different groups? How is it different?

B. WHAT DO LEARNERS THINK THEY SHARE IN THE COURSE OF A DIALOGUE? WHAT IS SEEN AS IMPORTANT TO SHARE?

Dialogue

- What did you get from that class? What helps you learn? What helps you remember things? Understand things?
- When you are in a group do you always say what you mean? Is that different in different groups? What makes the difference?
- Is there a difference in what you say or share and how to say it in small groups rather than in whole class groups?
- What are you sharing with other people in your different groups? Are you saying different things to different people? What determines what you tell who? Is it the same for the others do you think?
- Are there some people you have more in common with than others? What sorts of things? How do you find out about people; that you share the same ideas; think the same way? Is it all in what people say? Are there other ways?
- What about those you don't have anything in common with? How do you talk to them? Are they more difficult to work with? Why? Do you talk more or less to them? Does it get easier?

- Do you feel different from the others in the group? How?
- When you feel you are very different from others in the group does that make a difference to what or how you say things? What differences?
- Do you get more from working with people you like/have something in common with?
- Is it easier to work with people who you think like/understand you?
- How do you show you like/understand them?
- Can you identify with what people are saying, do you think, even when you feel you don't have a lot in common?
- When you are talking in a group, are you being yourself? What are you trying to do?
- Is it important to have things in common with the teacher?
- What helps you engage personally /generally with the teacher? And with what she is saying?
- Does being yourself in the group make any difference to how you learn? How do you contribute?
- What do you think of the others in the group? Who is important to you? Who is not? Do you show that? How?
- Are you using a language that is natural to you?
- Is it important to you to feel part of the group? Would that change anything you say, how you say it. How you act?
- Have you changed any of these things since being a part of that group?

**SO FAR WHAT I UNDERSTAND FROM WHAT YOU HAVE SAID IS....
HAVE I GOT THAT RIGHT?**

**C. TO WHAT EXTENT IS DIALOGUE, AND DIALOGICAL ACTIVITY, AS
AN EXPRESSION OF EVOLVING SELF AND INCREASING SELF
DIRECTION, CENTRAL TO LEGITIMATE LEARNING?**

Identity and Learning

- How relaxed are you in that classroom?
- Are you more relaxed now than you were? Why? Why not? Has anything happened to make you feel that way?
- Are you finding things easier, or less easy, than they were at the start?
- Why is that? Have there been changes in how you feel in the group?
- Is there more talk or less? Do you say more or less? What do you talk about that is different to the start? Why is that?
- Have there been changes in the way you speak or act in the group/ in the classroom? What changes? Have the changes brought you closer to some people? Taken you in a different direction? Why?
- What about with people in other classes, other situations, outside college/school even?
- Have your relationships in the group changed? Are there people you know better? Can work with more easily? Why is that?
- How are you finding your class work? Is it easier/harder than before?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND FOR TAKING PART. I LOOK FORWARD TO MORE DISCUSSION WITH YOU DURING MY NEXT VISIT. AS YOU KNOW ALL OF THIS IS CONFIDENTIAL. I WILL REACH GENERAL CONCLUSIONS FROM ALL MY INTERVIEWS AND USE THESE IN MY THESIS AND MY VIEWS ON DIALOGUE AND LEARNING. SEE YOU NEXT TIME.

Appendix 3

Teacher/Lecturer interview

Learning

- Defining learning
- Learning from elsewhere (perceptions of value)
- Perception of learner aims for learning
- Teacher learning aims
- Perceptions of how learning takes place
- Impact of the formal learning process
- Improved or diminished learning ability – what factors
- Influences of the learning process on perceptions of self and others

Dialogue within the learning process/other expressions of identity/self-making

- Importance of talking and discussion in the learning process
- Talking and discussing – differences?

- Learners talking as a thinking aloud process/connecting to the group/being an individual / showing what has been learned
- Nature of talk in whole class/group discussions (sharing/dominating/ moving towards commonality/ standing apart)
- Are there individual differences?
- Influences on learners of other learners (speech/actions)/Some more than others?
- Learners locating self within whole class/group discussions (finding common ground and areas of difference)/Some more than others?
- Self expression – important/how?
- Contextual constraints (actions/ speech/values “being cool”)
 - learners being themselves (whole class/group/paired discussions)
 - key factors in influences of others: speech/gestures/what is said
- Changing patterns of participation of individuals in the group /kinds and levels of engagement or constant?

Appendix 4

Research Briefing Sheet

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this piece of research.

My name is Anne Pia.

I am a doctoral student at Edinburgh University. I have spent all my career in the field of education and I hope that my thesis, which is on the relationship between identity and learning, will be useful in helping us understand the learning process better. The more we understand it, the better it is for everyone.

I am therefore very interested in how you perceive your identity, what made you who you are today, how you feel about your learning experience and classroom relationships, and the kind of dialogue and discussion that takes place in and out of class. I am also interested in what teachers have to say about your classroom experience.

Some of our discussions over the next few months will be led by me and others by you. I will choose the topics for some of our discussions but not for them all.

At the end of this process, I will share with you some initial findings and reflections.

Please note that everything you say will be treated in the strictest confidence.

I appreciate your support.

Appendix 5

A Data Gathering and Data Analysis Model

(Holland and Lave, 2001) and (Erben, 1998)

1. specific events (historical/thought)
historical struggles in person
incorporating others and “not-in-me”
“colonisation” by others, durable self.
2. local context of specific events
family/births/deaths/
circumstances, hobbies/home/
relationships/happiness/anxiety/
fear/hopes/disruption/nostalgia.
3. historical struggles in person
constellations of self
colonisation by others
durable self
4. local contentious practice
lived experience
family/community/learning /work
Ego/Alter
Dialogism
Enacted self
Authoring and Orchestrating
Antimonies and polarities

Incorporation and not-in-me
Spaces between self and others
Constellations of self
Durable self

5. societal context
(geographical/social/political
historical struggles in person
historically institutional struggles
6. documentary Accounts (personal)
diaries/poems and songs/photos

Overarching Themes

- **Self-making – inner speech and inner activity**
- **Relation of local contentious practice to enduring struggles**
- **Cultural system (locating points gathered in ambiances of changing values – selfhood**
- **Chronology: dates of important public events- shaping influences on studied lives**

Appendix 6

First Impressions

Identities are sources of meaning for the actors themselves and by themselves, constructed through the process of individualisation (Castells, 1997, p.3).

Anthea

She came in late but quietly confident and self-assured with a knowing smile more for herself than for me. At the same time, there was something very calming and reassuring about her; solidity and a sense of herself. It was almost as if she had something up her sleeve. She appeared to be disinterested in her appearance, with a dogged approach to hairstyle and dress. Practical rather than sensitive I thought, but forthright, genuine and willing to be of help. There was nothing about her to suggest anything other than a matter-of-fact approach to her work and life in general. But she surprised me more than once in a gentle and profound way. Her opening shot was to offer me two poems to read: the first was written by an old lady in residential care, found in her locker after she died. The second was a reply to this poem from a carer. Two sides of the same story. As I read them, I looked up and saw tears in the eyes of a woman who looked weary and old before her time while still retaining a vulnerable and childlike quality. As our discussions progressed I no longer saw weariness and utility; her eyes spoke laughter, life and dreams of what might come.

Bob

Bob was waiting anxiously outside the door rather like a small boy waiting to meet his teacher. He had seemed so self-confident in class when we made the arrangement. He had an open engaging face and I thought I saw in him a wide experience of life; a person who liked to be active and was fond of the outdoors. At the same time there was something of the quaint in his behaviour; watchful and fragile; he was still in shock at his mother's death two weeks before.

There was nothing certain about Bob. He was both transparent and opaque at the same time. He seemed lost and questioning and it seemed that he had hopes that this engagement with me might be a way of finding answers. He had welcomed the first interview and said so. It had allowed him to talk. He said it felt like counselling. But at the end of the second interview my sense was that he left virtually empty-handed; he remained lost; devoid of answers and more worryingly, he had maybe even lost sight of the questions. He disturbed me deeply not only because of his expectations of me, but more profoundly because of what I sensed to be his absolute accessibility and neediness. He touched without meaning to, on my feelings of inadequacy and he challenged my abilities to empathise at a very basic human level.

Catherine

Catherine arrived for her first interview on time, composed and reserved. I sensed that she had a mission; where some of her fellow students had volunteered for interview and had since changed their minds, she had been stoic and intense. She said she would come, so come she did. Her physical appearance, petite and slightly fragile belied a steeliness born not of hard-heartedness but a learned legacy from her past. Several weeks passed between that first meeting and the second, and there had been several cancellations. She was determinedly dealing with her college commitments and a son who was in hospital with tonsillitis. We met briefly a second

time in the corridor to reschedule. She was still in crisis and emotional; but she did, she said, want to see me again as soon as we could arrange it.

Evelyn

Evelyn came prepared, bringing with her a photo of her family. She was a neat, tidy little person who, I felt, had laughter and adventure in her soul and backbone at her core. Not to be underestimated, she could be epic and fierce, I sensed, in confronting challenge, but richly warm and kind. She had been hewn from those dismal west of Scotland landscapes of hardiness, thrift, no-nonsense and hard work, but she had discovered and nurtured a deep appreciation of, and wonder at, life and of those around her. She wore her heritage like a mantle. It disguised what made her different in thought, speech and action. It was a talisman for respectability and a passepartout. In Goffman's (1981) terms, this gentling of difference, this careful construction and ritual enactment of a self was only a taking up of conventions as part of a "participation framework"; one which she readily cast aside in favour of an altogether more seductive and enticing new horizon. When I think of her, I see her eyes; and in them, keen intelligence, light-heartedness; an impatience with stability, a sense of never-enough. In appearance a sensible Scot, she possessed a devilish appetite for the outrageous, a daunting capacity to absorb and to be inspired.

Freda

Freda had not been present at my initial meeting with the class, but she came forward with enthusiasm at the end of my second meeting with the group. She had a girlish quality about both her appearance and her mannerisms. She appeared reserved and when she spoke she did so in a very even, quiet tone. She was difficult to read and I was unable to form any strong initial impression of her. It seemed to me, however, that she had a story to tell and that despite the difficulties that its telling would cause her, she was determined for whatever reason to proceed.

She smiled a great deal but there was no joy or laughter there, only acceptance. Nor was she anxious to connect with me. We had very little eye contact. It was as though in telling me her story she was at times going through a ritual and at others she had to look deep within her to summon all her resources to do what she had set out to do and therefore could not attend to me.

I was totally unprepared for what she told me. There had been nothing in my professional background to prepare me for dealing with her and I was fortunate that in a sense, whatever pain that process of recall caused her, it had to some extent already been dissipated through expert help. This was then, a tale of survival recounted with a calm but positive energy.

Appendix 7

Transcript of Evelyn's Interview

(For reasons of confidentiality I have changed all the names of the key participants).

Some initial talk unrecorded.

Beginning of recording: My brother-in-law had to move away ??? ??? ??? ??? and it's kind of had a lasting effect.

Even now?

Huh-huh, huh-huh. I mean, in fact we were ... Glenboig and there's one, two wee villages and it takes about maybe ten minutes in the car to travel back and forward and we were driving by the other day there and there's still ... there's a bridge em, and it's got a hangman's noose on it and Scargafney – that's my surname – underneath it and it's still there and that was 1985, you know. So it's ... there's always that reminder. People will still bring it up. Maybe if you're out and somebody's maybe drunk or something 'Oh, was that your brother that went back to ??? ? Are you Scabgaffney's brother?' You know, just the odd comment. But I mean, not very often but it has happened, you know, now and again. So there's always this kind of feeling. And I think my husband always ... he still feels a bit kind of stressed out about it.

Has it affected you eventually too?

Yes huh-huh. I've been very defensive because at the time the children were only toddler ... my daughter was a baby, she was born in 1983. So when the strike was on she was just a young baby and my son was a toddler. Em and I really feel very protective ... I mean all 4ft 9 of me ... you know what I mean? If anybody had come near me or say anything to me, I would have just sort of went for them.

Did they? Did you have anything to deal with?

Just people not talking to us. Em what happened ...

??? enough surely?

Aye. Well in a small community it is quite bad. But em, after a while, eh, my husband ... during the strike there was a kind of strike centre thing that had been set up for like meals and food parcels and what have you. My husband and my brother (he wasn't a miner) but em, went up one morning and em ... I mean, in the strike centre was like ... I mean I had a couple of uncles that were in there as well and went up and they sort of challenged everybody ... if you're gonna come down and ... he'd been told we were gonna get our windaes put in and you know, there's gonna be a lot of trouble. So he just went up and said 'Anybody that's gonna do it now just stand up and we'll get it sorted out now.' And that kind of sort of diffused the situation because a lot of them sort of thought well, it's not really anything to do with him, you're still on strike, you know? But there's still the odd comment, or kind of feelin em, after all these years.

Hard to live with.

Mhm.

How do your children feel about it? Do they ...

Well they were ... they were unaware, they were very young em, so it was like ... my son was only about 3ish, my daughter was a baby em, and now because there aren't any pits open anywhere in Scotland, it's you know, it's very rarely mentioned. My husband's always been very proud that he is miner, that he was a miner and he loved his job. He worked at the pit face for twenty two years. He loved it. It was a very hard ... dangerous, kind of hard work. He did love it.

How did you feel about the strike, yourself personally?

Personally I thought it was wrong. I thought ... well I thought ... I didn't think the strike was about the miners, I thought it was about Arthur Scargill's ego and Maggie Thatcher's ego clashing and I felt he kind of used the miners to try and, at the time, bring them down and it was never ever gonna work because of the climate at the time. People just had had enough of strikes in the 1970s and I think when you know

... at the time of the year when they went on strike, which was March it started, there was ... I mean by that time the coal stock piles, you know. You'd just come out of the winter so industries and homes didn't need coal through the summer. So I just thought it was a totally wrong thing to do. Wrong time of year. Wrong em, because it wasn't for the miner's benefits. It was for ... to me it was Arthur Scargill trying to take on the Tory government and he didn't win, he was never gonna win. That's my personal feelings.

It's hard if you've got those feelings and your husband's involved.

Mhm.

Isn't it ... and you're living in a community. That must have been very difficult.

It was because I really resented it. My family are not a mining family. My grandfather was ... my Dad's father was miner but apart from that, we weren't a mining family.

So you didn't know, it wasn't your culture really?

No, no. Em, and I just ... I resented the whole ... I resented living absolutely skint every week and then living on ... we got ... we'd a family allowance, which was ... I think at the time it was £13 for the two children and £11 and that was all we had to live on and it took us years to actually get back out the debt. Em, because em, at the time we didn't get any other benefits because the DSS assumed that you were getting strike pay. But they weren't getting strike pay, nobody was getting strike pay. The only ones that got strike pay were union officials and anybody that wanted to go on picketing duty got £2 a day and that's all that was getting paid out. People don't realise. People thought that the miners were living on like somebody said ...

Something, a basic wage or something.

Something like £26 strike pay a week and they didn't, they never got a tosser. I really ... I still resent having to live like that for a year and then years later having to try and claw it all back.

Yes and also dealing with all the kind of aftermath of it.

Yes, huh-huh, huh-huh.

Were you working at the time?

No, no. because I didn't have ... at that time ... my parents were older, my mother was thirty three when I was born, my father was forty. So by the time like my children came along they were older themselves and they werenae fit to ... I couldn't rely on my family to look after children you know. And there was no ... at that time there wasn't really any child care set up anywhere, you know, unless you had a really good job to pay for it.

So when did you start working?

Em, I started working 1987.

Right.

Huh-huh.

How long after the miner's strike ???

The strike finished in '85.

Right, right, yes.

I started work in 1987. Not in home care or anything, I actually started working in a warehouse. I started at Christmas time, thinking 'Well I'll get some money for Christmas presents' and I stayed there for sixteen years! *[both laughing]* Really because it was a ... the hours were great, ten till half past two and it suited me for like school hours. I didn't need anybody to look after the kids. My husband had left the pits by that time, he left through ill health, so he was in the house anyway. As I say, I worked there for sixteen years and then I decided it was ... it wasnae a bad job, I mean you were kinda ... it was kinda heavy work and ...

Physical work?

Physical work, huh-huh.

All hours as well then.

Aye, aye. But I mean, the people I worked with, it was a great crowd and I still keep in touch with them.

Good.

You know, I still have good friends from there. But I decided I've got a brain in my head, I want to sort of do something a bit more. So by that time I was getting fed up in the warehouse, so I did a night class, it was like Psychology and Sociology. I did that two years ago.

At college?

At this college.

???

Huh-huh and then I thought I quite liked ... and a lot of people in the class at the time were working in home care and you know, that kind of sort of work. And I quite liked the idea of it, so I just applied for several sort of places and I never heard anything for ages and then I got two job offers in the one day! As it always happens! *[both laughing]* Eh, one from Key Housing, which was a kind of residential place up in ???hill, and for North Lanarkshire. I fancied the North Lanarkshire because I thought the hours would be better, it would suit me better, it would be more flexible and that's where I've been ever since. And then I decided, last year, that I would like to do the HNC because they don't really have any kind of training plan, you know, it's ...

It's too loose is it?

Aye. Em, when I first started I was sent on a moving/handling course, only because I wouldn't have been allowed to do my job if I hadn't and I've had no training whatsoever. This is me slagging off North Lanarkshire here!

I need to get all this, this is interesting though.

I've actually had no training at all on anything, em, since I started eh ... So I thought right, I'll do the HNC and see where that gets me.

Tell me,.....what was ... can you remember when you decided you wanted to go to night classes, what was the thing that made you suddenly think ...

Well, I've always been quite interested in like the Sociology and Psychology sort of stuff. I like ... I like to understand how people tick and why people do things and what have you. And em, I can't ... I think I was talking to a girl that I used to work

with and em, she said she quite fancied doing like Psychology and em ... and I just phoned up the college and asked them if they did any courses and they said they did, there was like there was an introduction to Psychology and then that followed on to like a Sociology, there was like an NC in Sociology. Em, I thought well, I'll give it a try.

Can you think back in your life to how that interest in Psychology developed, or what things were around it? Was it always interest in people, or what was ... were there things in your life that ...?

Probably my family, actually. My mother was always, my mother had depression from whenever I can remember back sort of thing, so I've always been ... and my mother's sister had it as well and my cousin is like a manic depressive and I always thought I wonder if that kind of runs in families? That kind of thing, you know. Em, and my daughter actually suffers from depression as well and I've had it as well, I've had post-natal depression. So that kind of ... you know, has always kind of interested me ... why do people get this? Some people get it and other people don't. Is it something to do with your family? Is it something to do with ... to do with your medical history, or whatever? But I've always ... it's just something that I've quite liked looking up, you know.

Has it helped you? I mean, that interest? I mean, have you found that useful for yourself?

Yes, huh-huh, huh-huh.

In what way?

In the classes, especially in the like the Psychology, that we did at the beginning of this course and I did in my night classes, it was about people's like personalities and why they behaved the way they do and that kind of thing. Not anything in depth just sort of general, you know. And you think 'Oh fine, that's why somebody's like this', or you know ... it just makes you think about people, or situations like ...

Was it hard for you ... it must have been, silly question! I mean, it must have been really hard for you all this being a depressive ...

Huh-huh.

... must have been quite difficult for you. What was your experience of childhood?

Quite unhappy actually. My mother was never, ever ... I don't mean ... she was just one of these people that didn't sort of connect with anybody, she was very ... she was ... before she died, she actually ended up, she was agoraphobic, she wouldn't go out at all. Em, she worked ... she was like ... she worked on school dinners, she was like a kind of supervisor sort of thing. That suited her fine because she didn't really sort of need to go in and work with everybody at the school, she could sit in her wee office and make up menus and that kind of thing. Em, but she ... funnily enough she's got friends eh ... or she had friends that she knew when she was a young girl, em ... and they used to always say about how she was a great laugh 'Your mother was always a great laugh.' And we used to say 'What?' *[both laughing]* ??? because we couldn't remember her ever having been a great laugh. You know what I mean, she was just one of these people, quite emotionless sort of person, you know. That's just the thing that everybody always remembers about her, she was ... and me and my sister kind of ... I've got two sisters and a brother ... but me and my sister that stays up here, we always kind of kid on, you know, we call mother 'wee Mary' ... 'we'll turn into wee Mary', you know! If we do anything a bit kind of weird! *[both laughing]*

Do you find ... did you feel different from your Mum then? Did you kind of ... when did you ever become aware that your mother was not quite well ...

Probably not until years later, not till I was an adult probably. Huh-huh.

But you said your childhood was unhappy?

Aye, aye.

How was it unhappy?

Not anything bad, or anything like that ... just em ... I don't know ... I don't know, maybe the depression kind of rubbed off on us as well kind of thing, you know. Em it just felt as though ... I don't ever remember having ... my husband had a very, very happy childhood ... he remembers things frae years ago like when he used to go ...

like, he would go out at eight o'clock in the morning with his brothers and come back in eight o'clock at night and take bottles of water and pieces and jam away.

And have fun?

Aye. And I remember I did that but it wasnae, no, it wasnae anything ... it wasnae that hap... like a good time sort of thing. It was just something you did to get out the house for a few hours!

I can identify with that, I didn't have a happy childhood either but I can't identify what was unhappy about it.

Huh-huh. Huh-huh.

I had everything I needed but it felt a very lonely, depressed time in my life actually.

Any, aye. Huh-huh.

So I don't know if that kind of fits in with some of what you're saying?

Aye, aye. Saying that, my dad was a ... he was a totally different ... my dad was a dead outgoing person, em and he was like ... and a very affectionate person. My mother wasn't ... my mother was like school, you know what I mean. But my dad would come totally different. So he was probably the kind of balance. Do you know what I mean? He kind of kept us all a bit kind of you know, made us not weird!
[laughing]

So do you feel you fitted into your family, or did you feel different, or ... did you feel like your sister, or ...

No ... my sister ... I'm a very quiet person, although as I've got older I've kind of come out my shell more.

You do don't you, often?

Huh-huh, huh-huh because you get a bit of confidence and you think well you know ...

Why shouldn't I say this?

??? any more.

Exactly.

Aye, that's right. But my sister was always very outgoing, she was ... she had like my father's personality. And my husband is the same, he's very outgoing, he's one of these people that you know, that's not shy at all, would talk to anybody and em ... so I've always felt that, that I'm very kind of quiet and kind of reserved sometimes.

Sort of apart in some way?

Huh-huh, huh-huh, huh-huh.

Where are you when you're apart? Like ... do you feel apart sometimes in the classes?

Huh-huh, I do actually. I like to sit back and just ...

Because sometimes I just was watching around ...

Aye, aye.

... and it struck me that some of your body language was about sitting back I would have thought.

Well I do that with people ... if I'm ... even like Gail, in the class is an old friend from years and years ago. Gail's very outgoing, in your face, that person ??? But even like if they're maybe having a night out or something, I can sit back and it's not that I'm not enjoying myself, I am, I'm thoroughly enjoying it but I'm just sort of watching and it's just my nature. I tend to kind of watch situations, pick up kind of feelings, you know, rather than just be ...em, just get like you know ... let my inhibitions go, I just sort of sit back and go 'Oh, right, right.'

Where do you see yourself in that class? Do you see yourself fitted in, or what bits of you fit in and what bits of you don't, or ... when you're sitting back observing what's going on in your head?

No, I don't feel as though I don't fit in., I actually quite ... I feel quite part of the class.

In every way?

Huh-huh, huh-huh. Em, as I say, as I've got older, I don't really care any more. When I was younger I would have worried and thought they're gonna think I'm ???

because I'm just sitting here and I'm not talking, or I'm ... you know ... em and I'd better start talking because I'd better start talking because they're gonna think I'm you know, a bit queer. But now I don't care if ... you know ... if people don't like me the way I am any more, that's just tough. I'm forty six and I'm not gonna change now!

So you feel you're very much yourself in that class?

Yes I am. Huh-huh.

Do you feel ... how about yourself in your work ... do you feel very much yourself, in the ... you're their home care bit?

Yeah. Actually I love the job. When I first eh thought about going in for it I thought 'I don't know if I could do this.' Because I'm quite quiet and I don't really ... I always felt myself as not being an outgoing person. But I feel like because I'm a home support worker and actually going into people's homes, sometimes if you go in all guns blazing, it kind of intimidates people.

Yeah, that's true.

I've got a lot of clients, especially older ones that you know, you can actually see them kind of wincing when certain people come in and you think ... the thing ... they've been really nice, they're just like sort of joking away sort of thing. You think, you know, you know, it's not really ... you know, they don't feel comfortable, you know. I think if you go in and you're just ... if I'm just myself, you know ... sometimes people tell me things that they wouldn't tell anybody else because I don't know, maybe I'm not just not sort of loud and ...

More of a listener maybe.

Aye, aye, aye. And that's one advantage I think, of being kind of quite quiet as well.

Can you trace your own development? You talked really powerfully about the miners' strike and that, are there ... you've been ... obviously we've all been on a journey, haven't we?

Huh-huh.

Trying to figure who we are and what we are and all the rest of it. You said you're a quiet person. Can you trace how you've come to that decision about yourself? And maybe other decisions about yourself.

I don't know what ... em, ... I think I just sort of accepted that you know ... when I was younger I always felt self conscious because I was so quiet and you know, I felt that people thought maybe she doesn't like me because she's not talking and whatever. But now, although I'm quiet, I'm more confident in myself, eh, and I don't feel ... like in the class although I sit and I maybe don't say very much but if I've got something to say, I say it and I don't feel as if 'Oh God!' ... I don't feel my heart racing any more as if you know, ... right I'm going to open my mouth and say it. I just ??? ??? that's ... it's just something that's come, probably with age, rather than anything else.

What other events in your life have been important events, do you feel in just making you the person that you are now?

[slight pause] I don't know. I mean, I've not had a very eventful life. I haven't done anything ...

I'd say managing ??? would make it very eventful!

Aye! *[both laughing]* ???

??? I mean deaths, or ...

My mother and father are both dead, dead now. They actually died within a year of each other. As I say, they were older when they had us. Like I always remember when I was younger, everybody's mother's had like mini skirts! My Mum had ??? ??? we kept saying 'Mum get ??? ???' She'd have looked ridiculous. My Dad had TB when he was younger, so he was never 100% fit, so he wasn't the type that would take you swimming or anything like that because he just wasnae fit for you know, anything like that. But, I don't ... I mean we didn't lose out on anything, you know, I don't think we lost out but we were always quite aware that they were older.

I'm just wondering if that's made you choose the job that you're actually involved in now.

Huh-huh, huh-huh.

Do you think that's been ...

Probably, aye. I feel comfortable working ... a lot of people don't have patience to work with older people but I feel as though I have. Maybe that's because of them, I don't know.

Were you badly affected by your mother's death, or your father's death? Was it not ...

I couldn't ... no ... I expected to be more affected by it than I was but I wasn't really. My Dad, em, he had TB when he was younger and he only had the one lung but then he got lung cancer. He didn't smoke but it was just because he always had a weak lung anyway. Then ... by the time my Dad was dying my Mum was like housebound, she couldnae go out, not ... she didn't have anything like physically wrong with her, apart from she had cataracts but apart from that ...

She could go out.

She could go out, she just didn't. She always lived her life kind of second hand, she was always ... it was like information my Dad brought in and 'Wait to hear what happened' you know and when you'd go in she would tell you what happened you know. It wasnae her experience, it was like his.

That's really interesting.

Mhm. But after my Dad died, my Mum got her cataracts done. It was just the way it happened, it all sort of happened at the one time. So she kind of came out a bit, more out her shell and we took her to visit her sisters up in ... she's got family up in Airdrie and we took her to visit her sisters and em she kinda sort of seemed to be more outgoing than she had been for years. Then she just kinda slumped into a depression again, after that. I think probably, maybe all the attention after my Dad died, all the attention she was getting from everybody because would come to visit her that hadnae seen her for years, you know. That had maybe come to the funeral and thought I'll go back and visit.

??? build on that.

Aye, aye. But she just sort of withdrew again into herself. Em, and then ... she's got two ... she had a sister, an older sister who had really, really bad Alzheimer's in the

last kind of stages and she's also got another sister who now is in the kind of later stages of Alzheimer's and my mother was beginning to go, get very kind of forgetful and you know, started to do kind of funny things. So we thought she was beginning to ...

Show the symptoms.

Show the symptoms. She actually died of a brain haemorrhage, just a sudden thing that happened and the next thing she was away kind of thing.

Was she old when she died?

Sixty eight, she wasnae that old.

Were you close to your Mum would you say?

No.

No.

Close to my Dad but not to my Mum, no.

What did you have with your Dad that was special?

I don't know. I was always good at drawing, always ... and he always encouraged me to draw and he wanted me to go to Art School and I didn't have the confidence when I was younger. So that was maybe the thing because he always kind of ... he knew I had the potential but I couldnae do it, you know. Maybe that's probably why I'm more kind of into kind of learning things now.

Is it about trying to pick up what your Dad wanted for you?

Aye, huh-huh, huh-huh. Although not ... not in the art side. I mean I got ... I went to night class and I did a higher art, like a few years later sort of thing, thinking 'Well I'll maybe kind of pick up on it' but I never ever did. Em, but probably em, ... my husband says, he says 'You'll be one of these women that when she's about seventy, take up art.'

Mary Wesley of the Art world!

Aye ??? he says 'That's the kind of thing you'll do, you'll just take a notion upon yourself one day and say right I'm gonna go to Art School or something!'

That self confidence thing, I mean, you felt that ... is that to do with ...

Oh aye. When I was younger I was ...

What was that about? Was that about school, or was it home, or?

[Sigh] When I was at school em, all my friends were all left school at sixteen and all got jobs. Em, I thought 'Well I'm not staying on at school because I wont know anybody there and I thought right, I'm not staying on.' And I did stay on for a wee while and I deliberately had a fight with one of the teachers, so that I could just walk out and say 'Right, that's it, I'm off.'

Is that right?

Aye. ??? aye. I just kinda, I kinda ... I don't mean I kinda made it happen but it was coming to a head. I kept coming in late and I knew I was gonna get a row for coming in late all the time until one day he went ... you know, he just went [*sounds like her slapping her hand on the table*] put the ruler down and he went 'Not again?' I just said "Well if you don't like it, that's tough." and I just walked out and that was me, I'd walked out of school. [*laughing*]

Is that what you wanted?

Aye, aye. So that was that.

Very interesting, actually.

My Dad went up and pleaded with the Rector to go to, to get back into school because it was quite ... the school I had went to was St Pats in Coatbridge, it was a good school at the time, you see and if you did well in it, you could go far and ... em, but no, I wasnae interested.

What was it about school that you didn't like?

I liked school, I loved English and I loved Art.

Right, so what was ... why ...

I don't know. I think I knew if I'd stayed on at school I would need to go to college or em, Art School and I knew I didn't have the confidence at that time in my life to do it. I think that kind of frightened me. I thought you know, I couldnae handle that.

**The lack of self confidence is interesting, isn't it? Where does that come from?
It wasn't that you weren't doing well at school.**

No, no. I mean I always got top marks in English and Art and they would have taken me through because I've got my higher English, higher Art and a couple of O levels, so I mean, what ... the qualifications that I had would have got me into Art School at the time, maybe not now but then, it would have been no problem for to get in. My Art teacher thought I was wonderful, you know, and was like ... he was actually ... he actually had tears in his eyes *[laughing]* when I walked out. I felt rotten, you know what I mean, but I thought 'No, I cannae handle it.'

So you'd obviously bought in to school, and the system ... it wasn't that you'd had a bad experience at school or anything like that.

No, no, no. No.

But somehow you didn't ... you just didn't have the self conf... I wonder, can you ... have you thought about just where, why ...

Oh aye, aye but I don't know. It's not that I didn't get encouraged because I did. I just ... at the end I couldn't have done it. I just I know I wouldn't have done it.

You obviously felt loved.

Huh-huh. Mhm.

You felt your Dad loved you, certainly and I think you believe that.

Aye, aye, aye.

I don't know about your Mum, did you feel your Mum loved you, or ...

[sigh] In her own way! *[laughing]*

But you felt your Dad loved you.

Oh aye, aye, aye. And yet my sister ... she was a year younger than me ... she's been really successful and she's got a degree in law and you know she's kind of ... there again, she was the same she went to school, she stayed on at school and she got like a job, two years ended up working in like the Civil Service, that's where all the ??? ??? at the time. She ended up doing the same, when she got a wee bit older, she went to ... she moved to Aberdeen at the time it was like the boom with the oil and what

have you and she ended up going on different courses and then she did like degrees and ...

So she'd just gone for it really?

She went for it, aye.

Where are you in the family?

I'm the oldest. But my sister never married, so maybe she never had anything to ... you know, a family to kind of hold her back. She ??? the independence.

But your self confidence, you feel's grown?

Oh aye, huh-huh, Oh aye.

What's helped it develop in your life?

I don't know, probably, as you're saying like family maybe doing something successful, bringing up my family and ... I don't really know. I mean, probably wee things maybe built up over the years. Pass your driving test, you know, do things like that and you think you know ... probably not that big a deal but if you build them up on top of each other.

I mean, I imagine the first step from moving from that situation of the miners' strike that you are so powerful about, I mean, into working in the warehouse. That first step into employment must have been scary. Or maybe, was it not?

It wasn't really scary because I always had it ... when I went for the job I had it in my mind that this is only for Christmas, this'll do me for Christmas.

So it didn't feel like a big thing.

No, it was just a bit of money to get some Christmas presents but I liked the job and I got offered like a contract, after I'd been in a few months and I thought 'Well, I may as well, it's good hours, I may as well stay here' and what have you. And as I say, the place had just opened at the time, so everybody that I was friendly with had all ... we'd all come in at the same time, so we kinda ... over the years your families were the same age and ...

You just stayed ??? that kind of group of people.

Aye, aye. It was quite a comfortable sort of place.

Did you feel that helped you develop your self confidence then?

Probably, aye, aye because I think I was quite ... although it was ... I mean there wasn't anything sort of ... it wasnae kind of brain surgery or anything. A lot of it was kind of physical work but doing like computer work in it as well, that I hadn't done before, so ...

Learning things ...

Wee bits like that huh-huh.

And being successful.

Aye, aye.

Talk to me about your kids.

Well, my daughter, as I say, em, she actually has depression now as well and that, that really ... it annoys me because I think is it a kind of genetic sort of thing, is this something that's gonna run in my family? Because my mother's mother, although it wouldn't have been depression at the time, it was just like went to her bed and never got up again. That's kind of what happened in they days.

Problem with their nerves, they would talk about wouldn't they?

Aye. My daughter's probably a wee bit ... a bit like myself actually, em, she's not working ... any job she goes for she lasts about two weeks and then walks out. Which it a mirror of what I did at school, you know what I mean?

Huh-huh.

Em, and I mean, you can see from the photograph, she's a lovely looking girl.

She is.

She's like totally, she's like tall and slim, opposite from me sort of thing, you know what I mean? She's got a boyfriend, Robert, whose Mum died a few years ago and the two of them were like kinda soul mates, they kinda console each other. But neither of them have got any kinda get up and gone, you know, they can't sort of seem to get out of the ...

They just want to be comfortable, into a bit of a comfortable zone there?

Aye, aye. Rather than one pushing the other on, or saying 'Right come on, we'll do this.' They always talk about 'We're gonna get a place and we're gonna do this' but they never, ever do it.

Do they live with you?

Yeah, huh-huh, aye.

Both boyfriend and daughter, or ...

No, no, although Robert's down all ... he comes down to our house quite a lot. My son is ... he's the opposite, he's like his Dad, he's got that kind of nature, he's very outgoing and he's always going somewhere and doing something, you know. He works in Call Centres, he's got that kind of nature you know and he could sell sand to the Arabs type! *[laughing]*

Have your children been really a great thing for you?

Oh aye, huh-huh.

That's the best thing I ever did in my life I don't know about you?

Aye, aye. I love my children. I'm not a very maternal ... you know how you get people and they see a baby and they go 'Ooh!' I'm not, you know like ...

But you love your own.

I love my own, aye.

Was that one of the greatest joys in your life, or have there been more ... better joys?

No, no, that was. That was, aye.

Have you felt comfortable in the mother role? Has that been ...

Aye, huh-huh. I can't ... em ... I mean, I think I did it Ok! *[laughing]*

If you felt comfortable, that's ...

Aye, aye. Mhm.

Where have you felt ... are there any areas where you felt uncomfortable ... in any areas of your life? To thinking back, or ... or even now, are there areas where you feel uncomfortable?

The only thing that really, really annoys me now is my daughter's depression, that I wish I could do something about it but I don't really know what to do. I know she's getting counselling and what have you but I probably ... I wish that I could sort of you know, say 'Right, ...'

Sort it.

'... Sort it out for her.' And I can't and that probably because I am a mother, I think I should be there to sort my children's problems out. I can't do it, no.

That's a hard thing. Are you closer to your daughter, or your son, or?

Probably slightly closer to my son, although I get on ... I mean brilliant with my daughter as well. I mean, what me and my daughter got is totally different from me and my mother, you know. Like it's just ... but I think because Geraldine's depression ... I think she's kind of more probably sort of ... not as ... not as kinda ... when she was younger she was brilliant, she was like really confident and she'd like ... she was quite a ... she was always in like clubs dancing and choirs and all that sort of thing and now she's bit by bit, she's kind of lost a lot of her friends. She's got two good friends that stick by her and Robert and that's about it really and it's because she's kinda pushed people away. One of her friends is actually Jane-Marie, who's up in the class and Jane-Marie can, she kind of sort of understands. Jane-Marie's Mum died a couple, a few years ago, so she kind of knows with the depression bit, what it's like for the depression but Jane-Marie's got over that now, she's getting on with her life, you know what I mean? And I think she kind of thinks now about Geraldine, 'Well I mean you've had depression a few years, so you'd better get over it now and start living,' you know! She's about the really only good friend that's kind of stood by her because Geraldine does have a tendency just to sort of push people away.

Does she talk to you about it, about her feelings?

Huh-huh, she does actually, she does. Which is again is quite a good thing, aye and a thing that I never did with my mother or she did with me, sort of thing. So that is a good thing as well.

How long has she had the depression?

Em, about three years. I don't know ... I don't know what kind of brought it on, it was sort of a gradual sort of thing that kinda happened. As I say if she gets a job, she'll maybe last a couple of weeks and then she's going 'Right, that's it, I'm off.' She's actually got an HNC as well in Display Design. She's very artistic. So's Martin as well, Martin's quite artistic. She went to, she was at the College of Commerce and did her HNC but towards the end of it I knew she was kind of struggling.

Depression beginning to set in, or was it not?

No the work she was doing but just kinda going to classes, she was just sorta ... she'd maybe go in for a couple of hours and then come back home again, do the rest of it in the house. And I knew she was kinda ... I thought ... she should have actually went on to do the HND, it was like a two year course but she ended up just coming away with the HNC.

You'd know the signs presumably?

Aye, aye, aye.

What about your son, is he ... you said you're slightly closer to him?

Well, I think it's just a kind of mother-son sort of thing.

I don't understand mothers and sons, mine are all daughters, I've got three daughters! What is it about that relationship?

Eh, probably, em, Martin confides in me more. Him and his father are very alike, they're like sporty and you know, a man's man. So it's like kinda ... so any problems Martin's got, I get them! *[laughing]* As I say, he's fine, he's quite outgoing.

You get a lot from him obviously.

Oh aye, aye, aye. Eh, he owes me a fortune mind you but ...

Tell me something I don't know!

Apart from that you know, he's kinda doing OK.

So when we were talking about em, you know, stress up there, just earlier.

Huh-huh.

And how, what you do to de-stress? Somebody talked about going home to their family and kind of ... made things alright. Would that be something you would say, or ... would that help you de-stress?

Aye, huh-huh, that was actually the last thing that was left on my mountain!
[laughing]

Is that right? The family?

Aye, aye.

I suspected that might be actually, and for a number of people in the room, you know.

Aye, huh-huh, aye.

You are comfortable there, that's your main group, eh?

Aye, aye.

Have you got lots of good friends?

I don't have a lot of friends. The ones I've got are good friends. I've got people I don't see from like one month to the next but I know that I could ... in fact I met one girl this morning, just coming into the college and she shouted me over and she ... we were friends like years ago and then she started working in the same place that I was working but we'd maybe not see each other for about two years and then sort of group up again and you know ... so because she's moved back out to Cumbernauld, I don't see her that often. But when we do see each other, it's like you know, you don't know when to stop talking!

You just pick up where you left off really!

Aye. Gail's a very good friend as well.

Are these people you were at school with then?

I wasn't at school with Gail, eh and Janice but I wasn't in the school with Janice either. I've got two school friends, one's in Canada now ??? and like when she comes over, she's the same and we ... she comes over maybe every three years and when she comes over it's brilliant but you know it's only gonna last for a couple of days. I've also got another very good friend that stays just down in England, eh and she's the same you know, like eh, just pick up where we left off sort of thing.

You said Gail's a friend, in the class?

Yes, huh-huh.

How did you meet Gail?

I can't really remember. She's always been look ... Gail's family and ... Gail's brother and my husband are quite kind of pally but I knew Gail before I knew him, if you know what I mean, they're kind of pally now. Em, I think it was just like the crowd that we went about with. Em, probably for maybe just before we were married and then eh, Gail's partner, who was my husband's best friend, he died, eh four years ago, so that ... there was always ... although Gail and her partner had split up, they were still kind of close. So there's always been the sort of connection as well you know. I did have a very, very good friend em, that we actually fell out ... em, which I don't know if it's kinda significant but just round about the same time as my Dad, or just after my Dad died. So just in between like my Mum and my Dad dying.

Can I ask what you fell out about?

Em, her older daughter stole money out my house and ... it wasnae her, it was like her mother, she's got a family that's one of these kind of families that battled with everybody, you know, always fighting with people and em, her mother tried to blame it on Martin, my son, who was just a wee boy at the time, saying it was him that had taken the money. But anyway, it got out of proportion but we were going to fall out anyway, no matter what happened, it was just the way things were heading.

Things just weren't gelling with you?

Aye, like my husband and ... Liz and I were pals and my husband and Liz's husband, Bob, were pals. But there was always a kind of rivalry, if you know what I mean?

Between them, or between the four of you?

Between the four of us really, sort of thing. Although ...

About money, or jobs, or where you lived?

Aye, aye, aye. It was just ... there was always a kind a ... I always felt there was a kinda jealousy with them, you know what I mean? If we did something, they had to do it ten times better type of thing. I think it was just ... by that time we had got kind of fed up with each other, so we just sort of ... that was a good excuse for us to fall out. It happened and that was it. Saying that, we're now friends again! But not close friends, we're just sorta we talk and ...

But you lost that kind of ...

Aye, aye, aye.

Were you upset to lose her at the time, or were you left with anything and ...

Em ... I was upset because it was like a friendship that I knew would never happen again, you know and it was like ... I thought once you fought once, that's happened it'll not, we'll never get back on track.

It's like bereavement, isn't it?

Aye, aye, aye. I don't ... I wouldn't have said I was like ... I kinda ... I had other things in my life then that was too important to think about you know ... to think about that really. But probably it's been all maybe connected in that one kind of year.

Your reaction to your Dad's death?

Aye, Mhm.

Did that last a long time, that reaction?

To my Dad's death?

Huh-huh. Or is it still with you?

Oh, it's still with me aye.

How long ago was that?

That's twelve years ago.

That's about the time my mother died too and I would say it's still with me too.

Aye.

Do you take time to grieve?

No, no. At the time I didn't because as I say, my mother had like died eleven months later, so it was like that happened and then you're kept so busy trying to kinda dealing with funerals and family and houses and what have you, you know. That at the time I just didn't ... I just sort of went through the process but you know I didn't ??? to do anything about it or anything you know.

Do you take time every now and again ... I always take ... on the day of my mother's death, the anniversary, I always take the day off work.

Right.

I always just spend time thinking about it and I found that over the years, the pain's got less.

No actually, in fact it's the opposite. Last year ... my Dad died on the 17th of May and I totally forgot all about it. It's the same with their birth ... my birthdays' the 17th of December and both my Mum and Dad's, although there was seven years like difference, they were the 16th of December and I forget about it quite often and I think maybe days later 'Oh God, it was their birthday ... Oops'

That's about other things, isn't it?

Aye, aye.

You still obviously feel affected by it. I'll talk to you the next time about your course a wee bit and learning.

Right. Huh-huh, huh-huh.

If that's all right? You're happy to go on?

Yes.

You're quite comfortable are you?

Yes.

We've had an hour, I think it's time that you had your lunch! I'm going to stop the tape just now.

Right, huh-huh.

End of interview.